

JUNE 16, 2003 • \$3.00

# The American Conservative

## Honor Thy Fathers

How Reforming Social Security  
Can Revive the West



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**Bush vs. the Neocons**  
**Scruton on Democracy**  
**Rosenberg on the Road Map**

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## DEMOGRAPHY MATTERS

I think Pat Buchanan's article in the June 2 edition is exactly on the mark.

Unregulated democracy is a very dangerous thing, being totally dependent on demographics. With birth-rate and immigration-rate dependencies, a cultural filter of some sort is absolutely required if democracy is to work. We have been blessed from the start in America with a very effective cultural filter, but it is naïve beyond imagination to think that our kind of democracy can be exported to the Middle East, given their present culture, and our power to change that culture anytime soon—if ever—is non-existent. Let's hope for the best and be prepared for the worst.

BILL CLARK

Philadelphia, Penn.

## NO TO TRADITION

I found Professor Versluis's article (May 5) most perplexing. Here was a demonstrably educated, articulate, and sincere man writing what was intended as a warm bit of "love Americana" that ended up being cuddly to the worst of modern trendy pathology. All this fuss and bother about strip malls replacing "traditional" rural scenery! Need I remind everyone about the absolute worst of the environmentalist movement, who would happily drive humanity underground to preserve their arbitrary notion of what the physical world should look like?

There have been many human creations in the last few centuries (the locomotive, the Eiffel Tower, vaccination, etc.) that were considered uncomfortably alien one year, yet happily grandfathered in the next to become an integral part of the culture. How can any ephemeral being presume to dictate the minutiae of life to a future that is equipped to judge better?

JULIUS WRÓBLEWSKI

via e-mail

## MERCHANTS OF DEATH

No war makes either the victor or loser richer. Both destroy immense amounts of people, money, munitions, and real estate. Correlli Barnett (May 19) describes the United States as emerging from World War II as "actually richer and industrially stronger." This was hardly the case for the average American. However, the most powerful financial and industrial groups in the United States emerged as much richer.

Following the Iraq war, average Americans are stuck paying \$100+ billion, plus the loss of military personnel and material, plus the loss of alternative use. This is not to say that no American has gotten richer. Lots of this enrichment has been kept as "national security secrets" regarding no-bid contracts and so on. Mr. Barnett rightly cautions the American public about the adverse costs of occupying other countries. But then again, it's not an adverse cost to certain privileged interests.

CARL OLSON

Washington, D.C.

## RETIRED GRINGOS

Regarding "Mexico comes to South Gate" (May 19), have you ever been in Jalisco? There are thousands of retired Anglo-Saxon people, and I can mention to you some other cities in Mexico that have large populations of white persons. I agree with you that we have to protect the U.S. and its borders; however, the problem of undocumented people (not illegal, for there is not a illegal human being in the whole world) is deeper than the mere fact of crossing your border.

RODOLFO MORA

Via e-mail

## SAW THE MOVIE

Taki's wishful thinking about how to inform the president is somewhat depressing (May 19). Somehow I can't visualize Laura reading her hubby signif-

icant selections, nor can I hope that Spengler's *Decline of the West* will soon be available in spoken format on tape.

The answer is movies. There are always counterculture movies made by young directors before they have been identified and properly punished. We need to find these. I am writing to suggest my favorite, a lesser-known Humphrey Bogart movie, "Sirocco." In it, he plays a gunrunner for the Syrian resistance to French occupation after the First World War. The French occupied from 1922 until 1946, and as soon as they were forced out, Syria returned to her customary political devices: bombings and rapid regime changes followed by periods of relative peace under a strongman dictator with the title of president. I seriously hope that this is what we want in Iraq because this is what we are going to get. Hopefully it won't take 24 years of occupation to re-learn this lesson.

JERRY BLAHUT

Bensalem, Penn.

## FEAR AND FREEDOM

Thank you for publishing James Bovard's excellent but terrifying article (May 19), shedding light on the abuses of civil liberties inherent in both the Patriot Act and in its conceived, but as yet unborn, spawn: the Domestic Security Enhancement Act. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Those who sacrifice freedom for security deserve neither and lose both." Americans would do well to keep those words in mind, lest out of hysterical fear we allow our leaders to turn this nation into a police state.

JOHN HOLDITCH

Birmingham, Ala.

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com), by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.

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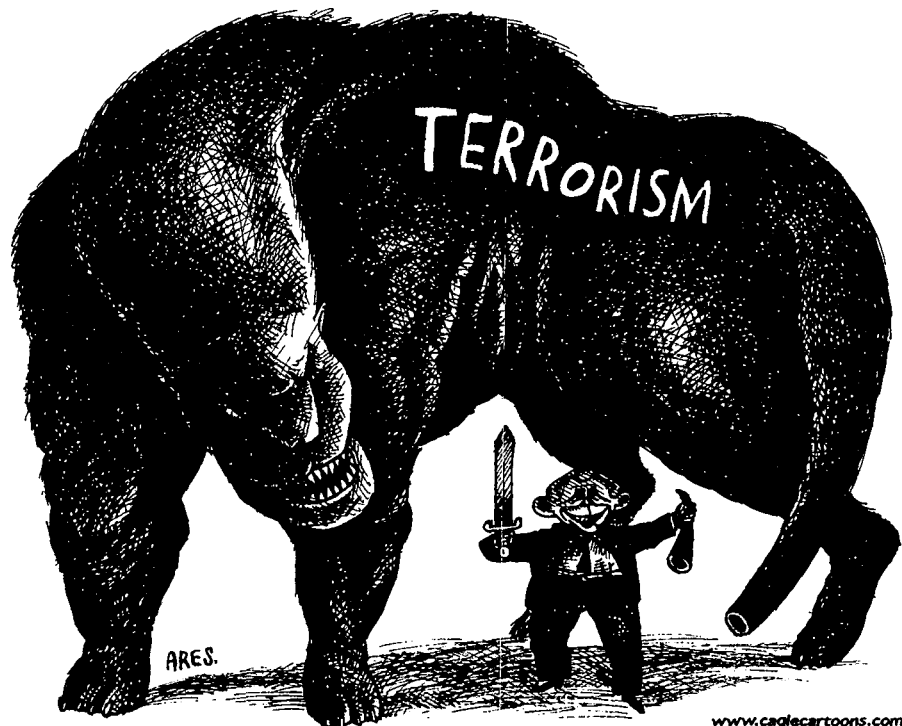
## DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT HOME

Graduation season is upon us, and with it renewed cause for concern about the state of America's colleges. Yes, the usual right-wing grievance—that faculties are disproportionately leftist—has some merit, but we see a more immediate and disturbing development on campus.

The antithesis of intellectual freedom is the passionate yoke of the mob. Yet in two commencement ceremonies, the newly minted bachelors showed little evidence of having given four years to rational discourse. At Saint Joseph's University, one in eight graduates noisily walked out before Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) could deliver his remarks. On display was the same disruptive, illiberal impulse of the Left that has marred so many antiwar rallies.

But the Right must examine its own conscience as well, for it behaved no better at Rockford College, where *New York Times* reporter Chris Hedges attempted to give a speech critical of the invasion and its consequences. Neocon press accounts depict a knee-jerk leftist diatribe worthy of Barbara Streisand. (It was, in the words of *NR*'s Jay Nordlinger, "stunningly strident.") The text reveals quite the contrary: a thoughtful and eloquent argument, rich with meditations on Dante, Thucydides, and Greek tragedy. Hedges's final paragraph opens with a line—"Think finally of what it means to die for a friend. It is deliberate and painful; there is no ecstasy"—allusive of John 15:13 and the Passion of Christ. Jeers, foghorns, and walkouts silenced him.

Secure in their beliefs, educated men entertain counterarguments and respect dissent. They treat those with whom they disagree with civility, even as they dispute their positions. Democracies need such leaders. History shows that tyranny can begin with the tyranny of the majority.



[CONGRESS]

## CUT UP UNCLE SAM'S CREDIT CARDS

Recall the campaign chatter about surpluses, lockboxes, and the ceremonial unplugging of Times Square's National Debt Clock in 2000. That was then. Congress has just consented to raise the \$6.4 trillion debt ceiling to \$7.38 billion—the largest onetime increase in history. Worse, the Bush budget is on track to increase the debt to \$9.4 trillion over the next four years (not including the cost of the Iraq war).

In 1981, President Reagan called a \$1 trillion debt "incomprehensible." Now Bush Treasury Secretary John Snow tells the Senate, "An immediate permanent increase in the debt limit is crucial to preserve the confidence in the U.S. government and to prevent uncertainty that would adversely affect our economic recovery."

Not so long ago, conservatives believed a flood of red ink would "adversely affect" us. Now Republicans argue that that we will only be saved by more spending—or maybe only that they will be. After all, it's easier to hit the campaign trail touting new education initia-

tives and prescription drug programs than exhorting the entitled to do a bit of belt-tightening.

[CULTURE]

## HERE COMES THE JUDGE

After eight years of Clinton, many social conservatives were willing to set aside certain misgivings about candidate George W. Bush to focus on one overwhelming priority: judges. With the Supreme Court advancing in age, the next president would have a significant influence on the shape of the Court. And in the aftermath of the 2000 ruling that struck down a Nebraska law banning partial-birth abortion, there could be no doubt that the abortion battle would be won or lost, not in the legislatures, but in the Court. Bush, it was thought, could be counted on to choose better nominees than Gore.

He disappointed pro-lifers early with his decision to allow federally funded research on existing embryonic stem cell lines. Furthermore, though Bush reinstated Reagan's "Mexico City policy," abortion providers abroad would qualify for funds under his proposal to fight AIDS in Africa. A partial-birth abortion

ban, which the Senate passed and the president promises to sign, appears headed for a stiff legal challenge. (Bush's principal pro-life accomplishment has been the commonsense "Born-Alive Infants Protection Act.")

Now *Newsday* reports that two justices—William Rehnquist and Sandra Day O'Connor—might retire this summer. The frontrunner for the next vacancy seems to be White House counsel Alberto Gonzalez, and according to *Newsday*, "Democrats and Republicans take it for granted that ... Bush will nominate the first Hispanic to the Supreme Court." But how stands Gonzalez on the right to life? As a Texas Supreme Court justice, he voted to allow a 17-year-old girl to get an abortion without informing her parents, even though lower courts had denied her petition to bypass Texas's parental notification law.

If the president chooses to advance his futile effort to win the Hispanic vote at the expense of his pro-life convictions, he will betray the Republican base that once put its trust in him.

[MEDIA]

## PC FOR PRIMETIME

NBC advertises the plots for its drama "Law & Order" as "ripped from the headlines." Often such stories are just different enough to irritate those familiar with the original cases. Sometimes more important, or less convenient, facts get left behind on the page from which the story is "ripped," leading the cynic to suspect an agenda at work.

Case in point: the May 14 episode based on the Beltway Sniper killings. Many elements of this peculiar crime were present, from an ostensibly random choice of victims to a bizarre relationship between the perpetrators, an older and a younger man. One alteration, however, was conspicuous. Unlike reality's two black men—one a Muslim, the other an illegal alien—"Law &

Order's" snipers were two white New Yorkers. Depicting this unpleasant truth about the year's most notorious criminals—that, together, they represent three of the Left's privileged "victim" groups—was apparently too much for the tender, politically correct sensibilities of the peacock network.

[POSTWAR]

## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

It's not news that companies like Bechtel and Halliburton were writing checks to GOP causes with one hand and cashing in on the Iraqi clean-up with the other. Less known is that Halliburton's contract to put out oil-field fires (an estimated \$600 million deal that turned into a non-starter when just a handful of wells were set ablaze) was only half the story. According to a spokesman, the Army Corps of Engineers, "played down" the full extent of a deal that actually authorizes Halliburton not just to repair the wells but to run them. As a result, the company Vice President Dick Cheney once headed is pumping 125,000 barrels of Iraqi oil a day, distributing it throughout the country, and managing imports of gasoline and propane. By August, the Corps promises a round of open bidding for the export contract. No word on whether Iraqi interests will bid to manage their own oil supply or if they will defer to a heavyweight with friends in high places.

A Cheney aide told the London *Guardian* that he "has nothing whatsoever to do with the Pentagon bidding process"—a technically accurate statement since there was no bidding process. Halliburton won the contract outright. But the Vice President is not without an ongoing interest in the company's fortunes. When he left to join the Bush ticket, Halliburton gave Cheney five years of "deferred compensation" that appears in the "\$100,000 to \$1,000,000" range on his annual financial disclosure forms. ■

# The American Conservative

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# Is the Neoconservative Moment Over?

The salad days of the neoconservatives, which began with the president's Axis-of-Evil address in January 2002 and lasted until the fall of Baghdad may be

coming to an end. Indeed, it is likely the neoconservatives will never again enjoy the celebrity and cachet in which they reveled in their romp to war on Iraq.

While this is, admittedly, a prediction, it rests on reasonable assumptions. But why should neoconservatism, at the apparent apex of its influence, be on the edge of eclipse?

Answer: the high tide of neoconservatism may have passed because the high tide of American empire may have passed. "World War IV," the empire project, the great cause of the neocons, seems to have been suspended by the President of the United States.

While we still hear talk of "regime change" in Iran and North Korea, U.S. forces not tied down in occupation duties by the anarchy and chaos in Iraq, are returning home.

The first signal that the apogee of American hegemony in the Middle East has been reached came as U.S. soldiers and marines were completing their triumphant march into Baghdad. Suddenly, all the bellicosity toward Syria from neoconservatives and the Pentagon, stopped, apparently on the orders of the Commander in Chief.

Secretary of State Powell announced he would go to Damascus to talk with President Assad. U.S. ground forces halted at the Syrian border. Our carriers began to sail home from the Gulf. All the talk of Iraqi war criminals hiding out in Syria and Saddam's weapons of mass destruction being transferred there suddenly ceased. "Mission Accomplished" read the huge banner on the Abraham

Lincoln, as the president landed on the carrier deck to address the nation.

When Newt Gingrich, before an audience at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), launched his tirade against Powell and the Department of State, accusing them of appeasing Syria, no echo came out of the Pentagon. Reportedly, Karl Rove gave Newt an earful, and the president himself was prepared to blast Newt, for he saw the attack on Powell as an attack on his own policy. A few editorials and columns praised Newt, but the neocons could sense that they were no longer in step with the White House. So, too, did every other Kremlinologist in this city.

Why did Bush order an end to the threats to Syria? The answer is obvious. He is not prepared to carry them out. With the heavy fighting over in Afghanistan and Iraq, the American people have had enough of invasions and occupations for one presidential term. The United States is now deep into nation building in both countries.

Moreover, Syria is not under any UN sanctions. Its leader did not try to assassinate the president's father. There is no evidence Damascus is working on nuclear weapons. Assad has not threatened us. A war on Syria would have no Security Council endorsement, no NATO allies, no authorization from Congress. Such a pre-emptive war would be unconstitutional and be seen abroad as the imperial war of a rogue superpower. For all the talk of unilateralism and of our "unipolar moment" President Bush clearly feels a need for allies, foreign and

domestic, before launching such a war.

Finally, having assumed paternity of 23 million Iraqis, few Americans are anxious to adopt 17 million Syrians. Damascus is a bridge too far for Bush and Rove, and with two wars and two victories in two years, why press their luck? The re-election that the president's father did not win—and not an empire—appears to be what they are about.

Therefore, for the foreseeable future, the glory days—of Special Forces galloping on horseback in the Afghan hills, of Abrams tanks dashing like Custer's cavalry across the Iraqi desert, of statues of Saddam toppling into the streets of Baghdad, and presidents landing on carrier flight decks in fighter-pilot garb—are over, behind us, gone.

And ahead? Like all empires, once they cease to expand, they go over onto the defensive. Like the Brits before us, we must now secure, consolidate, protect, manage, and rule what we have in the tedious aftermath of our imperial wars. And as we have seen in the terror attacks in Casablanca and Riyadh, al-Qaeda and its allies, not Tommy Franks, now decide the time and place of attack in the War on Terror.

With 25 U.S. soldiers dead and counting since Baghdad fell, what the empire now entails is a steady stream of caskets coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq and tens of billions of American tax dollars going the other way to pay the cost of reconstruction of countries we have defeated and occupied.

Victory has brought unanticipated headaches. Having smashed the forces that held Iraq together—Saddam's regime, the Ba'ath Party, the Republican Guard, the army—we must now build new forces to police the country, hold it together, and

protect it from its predatory neighbors. And there are Islamic and Arab elements in and outside of Iraq determined that we should fail.

Where Tehran and the mullahs coluded in our smashing of a Taliban they hated, and of their old enemy Saddam, they no longer welcome America's massive military presence in their region.

Most important, it appears the president has shifted roles from war leader to peacemaker. While the neocons are adamant in rejecting the road map to peace, drafted by the "quartet"—the U.S., the EU, the UN, and Russia—as a threat to Israel's survival, Bush has endorsed it and evidently means to pursue it. The neocons are already carping at him for pressuring Sharon to "negotiate with terrorists" and "creating a new terrorist state in the Middle East." Where White House and neoconservative agendas coincided precisely in the invasion of Iraq, they are now clearly in conflict.

While it has not happened yet, there is the possibility that our effort at nation building in Iraq will falter and fail, that Americans will tire of pouring men and money into the project, and will demand that the president bring the troops home and turn Iraq over to the allies, the Arabs, or the UN. As one looks at Afghanistan, Iraq, and a Middle East where al-Qaeda is avidly seeking soft targets, it may be that all the good news is behind us and that only bad news lies ahead.

If we have hit the tar baby in Baghdad, the president may be seeking to extricate us before we go to the polls 17 months from now. And should the fruits of victory start to rot, Americans will begin to ask questions of the principal propagandists for war.

It was, after all, the neocons who sold the country on the notion that Iraq had a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, that Iraq was behind 9/11,

that Saddam had ties to al-Qaeda, that the war would be a "cakewalk," that we would be welcomed as liberators, that victory would bring democratic revolution in the Middle East. Should the cream go sour, the neocons will face the charge that they "lied us into war."

Moreover, for a movement that is small in number and utterly dependent on its proximity to power, the neocons have made major mistakes. They have insulted too many U.S. allies, boasted too much of their connections and influence, attracted too much attention to themselves, and antagonized too many adversaries. In this snake pit of a city, their over-developed penchant for self-promotion is not necessarily an asset.

By now, all their columnists and house organs—*Commentary*, *National Review*, the *New Republic*, the *Weekly Standard*—are known. Their front groups—AEI, JINSA—have all been identified and bracketed. Their agents of influence—Perle, Wolfowitz, Feith, Libby, Bolton, Wurmser, Abrams, *et alia*—have all been outed. Neoconservatives are now seen as separate and apart from the Bush loyalists, with loyalties and an agenda all their own.

If Americans decide they were lied to, that the Iraqi war was not fought for America's interests, that its propagandists harbored a hidden agenda—as they decided after World War I and exposure of the "merchants of death"—they will know exactly whom to blame and whom to hold accountable.

The weakness of the neocons is that, politically speaking, they are parasites. They achieve influence only by attaching themselves to powerful hosts, be it "Scoop" Jackson, Ronald Reagan, or Rupert Murdoch. When the host dies or retires, they must scramble to find a new one. Thus, they have blundered in isolating themselves from and alienating almost every other once-friendly group on the Right.

Consider the lurid charges laid against all three founding editors of this magazine and four of our writers—Sam Francis, Bob Novak, Justin Raimondo, and Eric Margolis—by *National Review* in its cover story, "Unpatriotic Conservatives." Of us, *NR* writes,

They ... excuse terror. They espouse ... defeatism. ... And some of them explicitly yearn for the victory of their nation's enemies. ...

Only the boldest of them ... acknowledge their wish to see the United States defeated in the War on Terror. But they are thinking about defeat, and wishing for it, and they will take pleasure in it should it happen.

They began by hating the neoconservatives. They came to hate their party and their president. They have finished by hating their country.

This screed does not come out of the *National Review* of Kirk, Burnham, and Meyer we grew up with. It is the language of the radical Left and Trotskyism, the spawning pools of neoconservatism. And rather than confirm the neocons as leaders of the Right, such bile betrays their origins and repels most of the Right. One wonders if the neocons even know how many are waiting in hopeful anticipation of their unhorsing and humiliation.

"There is no telling how far a man can go, as long as he is willing to let someone else get the credit," read a plaque Ronald Reagan kept in his desk. The neocons' problem is that they claim more credit than they deserve for Bush's War and have set themselves up as scapegoats if we lose the peace.

Having enjoyed the prerogative of the courtesan, influence without accountability, the neocons may find themselves with that worst of all worlds, responsibility without power. ■

[a new deal]

# Honor Thy Fathers

## *A Family-Friendly Reform of Social Security*

By J.P. Zmirak

EACH WEEKDAY FOR the past five years, outside my apartment building in Queens, I have watched the old people gather like a flock of seagulls to wait for the tour bus. It disembarks daily from the neighborhood travel agency. It makes my morning to walk my dog past folks who remind me of my parents. A few white-haired veterans of World War II and Korea escort their improbably golden-haired, gold-plated wives, but most are gray merry widows in brightly colored sweatshirts bearing distant grandchildren's names—Heather, Robin, Brendan. The seniors file amicably on board with pockets full of quarters and wads of singles, *en route* to Atlantic City and its tinsel Trump casinos.

Since my late mother was a gambler, I know the drill: few venture past the lobby, anywhere near the poker or blackjack tables—the games of skill that might perk up an elderly brain. No, the elders congregate up front and perch for hours each day on stools at the slot machines—technological wonders precisely calibrated to make sure people lose at a certain pace so they don't walk out too quickly and never come out ahead. I used to joke, uncharitably, that

the seats were equipped with a vacuum pump that sucked in cash directly from the Social Security “trust fund.” When I reach retirement age, and there isn't anything left, no doubt I'll look back on those buses with a slow burn of annoyance, as I fry up a can of cat food.

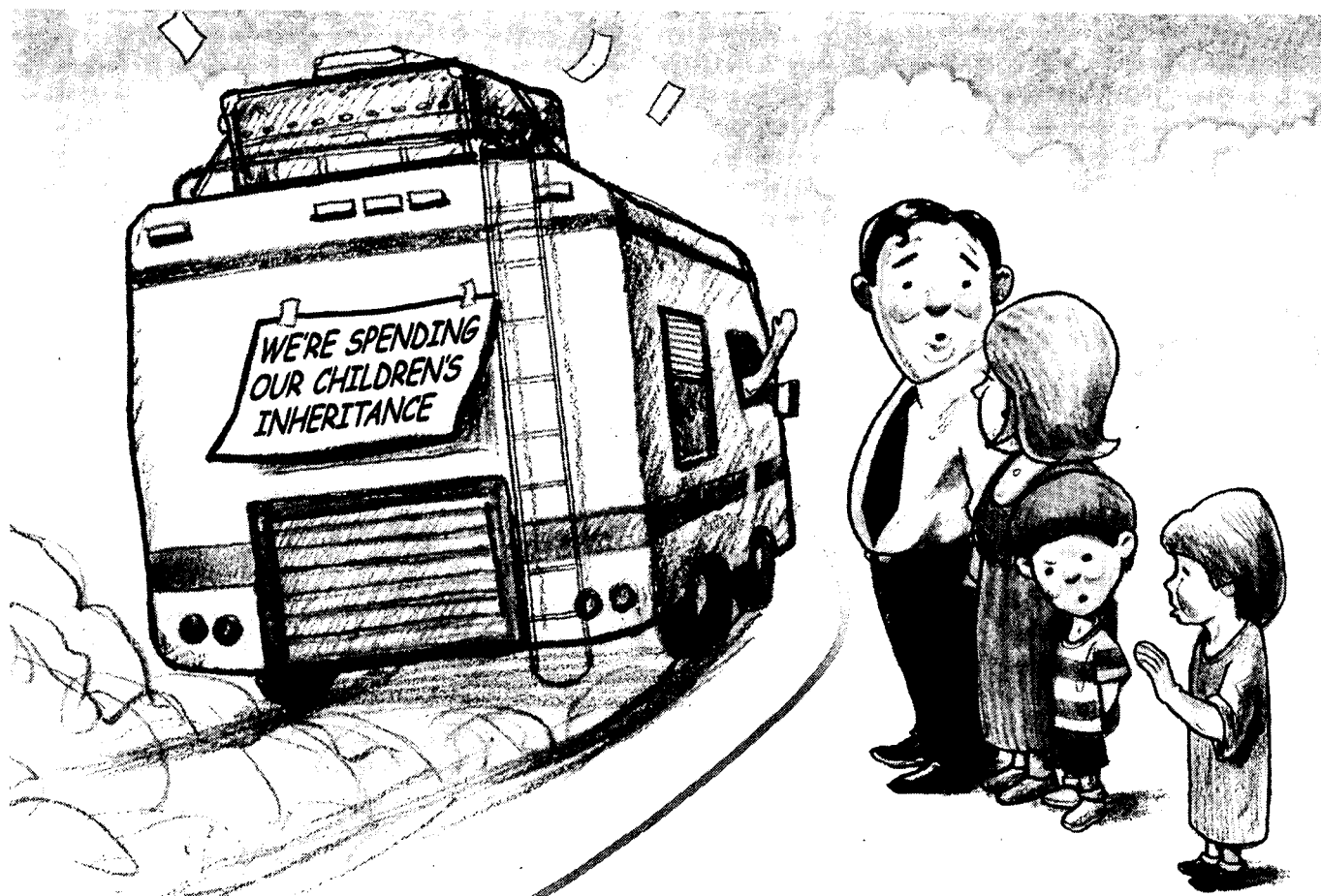
But I really cannot begrudge these retirees their fun. They are simply accepting the benefits of programs that were built before they could vote. The Social Security system was created during Roosevelt's New Deal in response to genuine cases of destitution among the aged during the Depression. It was designed to support people who lived past the average life expectancy—then 62—in the dignity and good health that befits an American citizen who had worked throughout his life. Born of a decent impulse, the system was gradually expanded and distorted, inflated into a pyramid scheme that cannot sustain itself.

While most critiques of our Social Security program focus on its financial insolvency—which is serious enough—I prefer to direct attention to the moral and social costs it imposes, the barrier it builds between the generations, and the pressure it exerts on working families. I

would like to propose in its place a new social insurance scheme that is more family-friendly and that reduces the artificially induced “necessity” of mass immigration into the West with all its attendant social costs.

Before the federal government became the pension plan of first resort for most Americans, the elderly relied upon two more traditional sources of support: accumulated wealth and their grown children. These twin pillars have for millennia been the mainstays upon which retirees depended, and our current system erodes them both. By pretending to serve as what it was never meant to be—an all-purpose, complete national system of social insurance—the Social Security system has long drained away funds from private pension plans and diminished the perceived necessity of savings. It has also created in the minds of the younger generations the perception that elderly parents are meant to be financially independent in their old age, safely collecting back the contributions they made over their working lives, plus a healthy return on investment—instead of depending, in part, on the support of their adult children.





CHRIS NIEHS

The German social philosopher and economist Wilhelm Röpke saw that the growing importance of the state as the ordinary guarantor of well being for the individual must come at the expense of the family—the bedrock unit of any healthy society. He made that point with an anecdote:

A short time ago, a member of the House of Commons movingly described her father's plight in order to prove how inadequate the welfare state still is. But this is no proof of the urgency of public help; it is merely an alarming sign of the disappearance of natural feelings in the welfare state. In fact, the lady in question received the only proper answer when another member of Parliament told her that she should be ashamed if her father was not adequately looked after by his own daughter.

The state, by removing the financial impetus to family unity and rendering personal responsibility for one's family unnecessary, attacks two important virtues: loyalty and accountability. Such virtues, which some have called "social capital," are the very ground upon which a free society is built. Röpke, an architect of the postwar German economic "miracle," saw that the free market is an amazingly efficient producer of wealth and distributor of goods, which cannot be replaced by the state. (He was a student and lifelong friend of Ludwig von Mises.) But Röpke argued that the government had a larger role than simply playing "night watchman," protecting private property and enforcing contracts. For the market to survive, the state must take what minimal steps were necessary to insulate individuals from market failures, to promote the cohesion of the family, and to support the very virtues that make the market

economy and a liberal society possible.

Following Röpke, a genuinely social conservative approach to reforming Social Security would aim to strengthen the family, encourage individual savings, and generally contribute to creating social capital—the non-economic, apolitical reserve of spontaneous order and co-operation that predates, underlies, and makes possible the survival of a free civil society. No society that refuses to save, indeed one that lives on an extended credit-card spree (as many Americans have been encouraged to do), can remain prosperous for long. It is sobering to recall the prone, bankrupt nation of Argentina was once—as late as the 1920s—almost as prosperous as the U.S. Reckless state spending that punished thrift helped impoverish that naturally rich country; can we avoid a similar fate?

Our current system is based on a lie: it does not pay people back what they put in, plus interest or investment income. It

pays them far more—and confiscates that money from younger workers supporting children. As author Peter G. Peterson calculates,

The average one-earner couple retiring today will get about \$123,000 more out of Social Security than the average earner and his or her employers ever paid into it, plus interest. Omit the employer's contribution and calculate only the payback on the personal taxes paid by the employee, and the windfall rises to \$173,000. With Medicare thrown in it rises to nearly \$310,000, much of that tax-free. These are not "earned benefits" but unearned windfalls that our children will have to pay for and certainly will never enjoy themselves.

A researcher for Peterson's 1989 book, *On Borrowed Time*, told me that the average American retiree today exhausts the money he put in, with interest accrued, within the first 19 months. After that, without realizing it, he is effectively receiving welfare benefits—distributed not according to need but rather according to his previous level of income.

Most noxiously, the Social Security tax is capped at \$68,400. This means that Ted Turner and Bill Gates pay no Social Security tax at all on every dollar they earn above this amount, though they will collect vastly more in annual benefits than average workers. Thus the poor continue to receive far less than the upper and upper-middle classes, and even the extremely wealthy continue to draw inflated benefits—which they understandably regard as rightly theirs. That is what the system has taught us all to think.

But it is not true, and it certainly is not fair. It is hard to imagine a more immoral system of redistributing wealth, which recalls the *ancien régime's* infamous tax on salt. Like today's high-earners, the nobility and clergy in pre-revolution-

ary France enjoyed exemptions commensurate not with need, but with political clout—until the wells ran dry.

The Social Security payment system is equally regressive. The tax that funds it is applied to wages—even those of the very poor—but not to investment or dividend income. The tax allows no exemptions for dependent children. Even the Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC), intended as a partial refund of this feudal tax to the poorest working families, is now the focus of harsh regulation and disproportionate audits by the Internal Revenue Service. Middle-class Americans—who do not even enjoy the EIC's cold comfort—must shoulder an ever-increasing financial burden that takes no account of their child-rearing costs. The federal government has already estimated the costs if current trends continue: in 2040, the average worker will pay between 35 and 55 percent of each paycheck for Social Security and Medicare—up from 17 percent in 1995.

Who comes out best under such an arrangement? Double-income, no-kids couples, who need not allot money for tuition or child-friendly medical insurance. The people who suffer the most are those who actually produce the next generation of workers: large families, who do not even benefit from per-child deductions, since Social Security is

productivity with a growing population. (The more productivity grows, the fewer new workers you need to support the elderly—and the converse.) But that combination does not exist, either in Europe or America, where productivity growth has stalled and birth rates have bottomed out. This is not the place to investigate why native-born Europeans and Americans have stopped having children; the fact is that they have, and as a result our pension plans grow more top-heavy by the year. The average woman in EU countries has 1.5 children in her lifetime—not enough to replace the current population; meanwhile, women across the Islamic world average four to five—enough to double the populations of many already crowded, impoverished nations.

The Western birth decline makes our own social insurance system untenable, as Peterson noted in *Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?*: "In 1960 there were 5.1 taxpaying workers to support each Social Security beneficiary. Today there are 3.3. By 2040 there will be no more than 2.0—and perhaps as few as 1.6."

In Europe, the addiction to lavish social insurance has already set in motion a vast reverse colonization of the continent by peoples from the developing world. As readers of Pat Buchanan's

## THE AVERAGE WOMAN IN EU COUNTRIES HAS 1.5 CHILDREN; WOMEN ACROSS THE ISLAMIC WORLD AVERAGE FOUR TO FIVE.

creamed right off the top of every paycheck at the same regressive rate. (In any case, per-child income tax deductions have declined precipitously, measured in real dollars, over the past 40 years.) Thus the system punishes the very people who make its continuation possible.

The only way to maintain a pay-as-you-go system is to combine growth in

*Death of the West* know, European politicians will soon be faced with a stark choice: cut benefits to ever more demanding senior citizens—the same spoiled Boomer generation that did not replace itself—or open the floodgates of Europe to young and fertile workers from outside. Most likely they will come from the teeming Middle East, where

population grows steadily and political instability drives disgruntled millions from their homes.

This process will be made unstoppable if the European Union swallows the suicide pill that is Turkey—leaving that country's porous, ungovernable border with Iran, Iraq, and Syria the last barrier keeping millions of refugees and economic migrants out of Berlin, London, and Paris.

In America, with our birthrate a little above the replacement minimum of 2.1, mass immigration is already the only reason our population is increasing. While an influx from Christian Latin America is not nearly so troubling as the march of Islam into the heart of Europe, it does raise serious issues for national unity—particularly as so many of the immigrants to the U.S. come from a single neighboring country, Mexico, with a potent nationalism and irridentist claims upon large sections of our territory.

I have long said, half in jest, that the future of Europe is “a brown hand pulling a white plug out of the wall.” At the very least, policy makers ought to wonder about the future of a pension system that relies upon heavily taxing poor recent immigrants and their children to support more prosperous elderly people of another race—particularly of a resented, displaced majority. A professor of Chicano Studies at California State University, Rodolfo Acuna, has applied this logic to America. He said of the Latino community, “There’s a growing feeling ‘Why should we pay for all these senior citizens’ if the majority of them are white and all they were willing to pay for was prisons?” Professor Acuna has a point. How exactly *do* we justify over-taxing struggling families with children to keep gassing up the Winnebagos of over-rewarded elders? That bumper sticker “We’re spending our children’s inheritance” ought instead to end with “birthright.”

And to buy what mess of pottage? A life of isolation from children and grandchildren, an “independence” that many of them would cheerfully trade for closeness to the people whom they nurtured throughout their lives. Instead they subsist on e-mails, semi-annual visits, some Hallmark cards, a Web-ordered floral bouquet on Grandparents’ Day—

### IMAGINE A SYSTEM THAT DID NOT PENALIZE **FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN OR OVER-REWARD CHILDLESS, PROSPEROUS INVESTORS.**

even as their descendants grow up with little or no exposure to their elders’ wisdom and cultural memory. My own nephews and nieces know little of their grandfather’s history, have absorbed almost nothing of his worldview, heard few of his tales, his recollections of the Great Depression and his service in occupied Germany—much less of our family’s origins in the Adriatic islands long ruled by Venice. I do not think that my clan is exceptional in its rootlessness; in fact, we are all too typical. The chain of memory that has traditionally linked the generations has been stretched almost to snapping, with the hearty encouragement of a government policy that reduces elders to a second adolescence—an over-funded independence, shorn of responsibilities or community. Meanwhile, the next generation can barely afford to reproduce itself—not unless it is willing to subject its children to dangerous, degraded public schools and forgo the prospect of private college education.

There is another way, and I have seen it just a few blocks away. My best friend since childhood lives in the second story of his parents’ two-family house in Queens, with his own wife and children. When the children are not at their (parochial) school, they are watched by their grandparents downstairs who

speak to them in Italian, let the kids pitch in while they cook recipes from the Old Country, and teach them to tend tomatoes in the backyard. At their other grandparents’ house, the children learn some Tagalog and take part in the family rosary. They also spend plenty of time on the Internet and playing computer games, generally participating in mod-

ern life. But these two young Americans are privileged in ways that most of their contemporaries cannot even imagine—and their grandparents are blessed. They can pass along more than their genes and their money to the second generation; they can also offer their wisdom, their faith, and their hope.

So what kind of government policies would encourage this healthier model of family living? Instead of wading, wonk-like, into the numbers, let me suggest a thought-experiment. Imagine a system that did not penalize families with children or over-reward childless, prosperous investors; that did not socialize the benefits of childbearing, while imposing the costs on couples; that required prosperous adults to support their elderly parents—just as it had once required those parents to feed and educate their young. A simpler, fairer system aimed at promoting family unity, fertility, and solidarity among the generations—while providing a minimum benefit that ensured that no childless senior would live in poverty. How would such a system work?

It would provide a basic income, perhaps allotted according to cost of living in an individual city, to every retired American, regardless of his previous contributions or income. It would collect the money for this stipend through



the income tax, with full deductions allowed for parents with children. On top of this basic stipend, it would draw from the salaries of every working adult a certain percentage, payable directly to his living parents—or whoever had claimed him regularly as a dependent on past tax returns. The more children one had borne (or adopted) and raised, the more sources of income one could expect. The more successful one's children became—at least, financially—the better one's own retirement. This might or might not change people's child-rearing decisions; massive subsidies to mothers do not seem enough to buy more Italian babies. But in the long run, I would argue, it would indeed encourage a higher birthrate—both by reducing the tax burden on young couples and by offering a strong, long-term incentive: the prospect of a more comfortable retirement. In every traditional society, people look to their children as the comfort and support of their old age. By taping into that instinctive behavior, rather than undermining or wishing it away, we might help blunt the Western demographic implosion.

Such a system would also be fairer. It would measure more accurately the vast contributions parents make to society. It would also greatly diminish the resentment young immigrant workers must feel at contributing to the nation's retirement system, by making their own parents their primary beneficiaries. Whatever the legal minimum contribution to parents' support mandated by law, an optional "check-off" on one's income tax would allow a worker to pay more, in pre-tax dollars, to benefit his parents. Generous tax deductions would benefit adult children who provide their parents food and shelter.

To those who consider this system unjust to the childless, the minimum benefit for every American must be sufficient to permit a dignified retirement. Also, it

should be noted, the childless typically have more income available for savings and investment than those who are engaged in feeding, clothing, and educating the young. Those who have forgone consumption, investment, and leisure in order to raise up the next generation of citizens—of workers, soldiers, mothers, doctors, nurses, and firemen—deserve some direct reward from the society whose future they have created.

This is the outline of a truly pro-fami-

ly social policy, one that accords with the best impulses of Americans old and new, bends public policy to mirror the natural order rather than undermine it—and pays due honor to our elderly citizens, recognizing that we ourselves are their greatest achievement. ■

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## Follow the Road Map

The survival of the state of Israel is too important to be subordinated to Washington power games.

By M.J. Rosenberg

PRESIDENT BUSH'S DECISION to advance the Road Map to Middle East Peace with his re-election campaign looming demonstrates no small amount of courage. Traditionally, presidents avoid even the mildest suggestion of pressuring Israel except in the first year or two of their terms. After that, until safely re-elected, they avoid the Middle East like the plague.

The reasons for this timidity are obvious. The very idea of proposing a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is treated by many in the pro-Israel community as tantamount to opposing Israel. Those of us in Washington (I worked on Capitol Hill for 15 years) are particularly accustomed to a way of thinking in which support for the *status quo*—i.e., erecting roadblocks to thwart the peace process—is considered "pro-Israel," while offering ideas on how Israel can achieve both peace and security through territorial compro-

mise is considered politically crazy and fundamentally "anti-Israel."

Any senator or representative who consistently supports resolutions praising Israeli policies and bashing Palestinians—without offering any realistic proposal to achieve peace—is hailed as a stalwart friend of Israel. No matter if the legislator in question devotes not five minutes of his year to thinking about Israel's situation. All he needs is a legislative assistant who puts him on the "right" resolutions, and he will be a hero to pro-Israel activists. But those who strongly support U.S. efforts to promote an agreement, who give serious attention to Israel's plight and how to remedy it, become known as "weak on Israel" or "not a friend." That, as every House and Senate member knows, is not good for one's political health.

Of course, that is how the Washington power game works. The only difference is that, for some of us, the survival of the

state of Israel, a state whose existence many of us regard as miraculous, is simply too important to become part of Washington games.

And it is a Washington game. After all, it isn't played in Israel.

In Israel, Right, Left, and center openly fight for or against government policies. Newspapers and other media outlets do not fear being criticized as anti-Israel. There is no CAMERA (Committee for Middle East Accuracy) monitoring the Israeli media to make sure it toes what it calls a pro-Israel line but what is actually the anti-peace line.

Of course, by definition, Israelis cannot be called "anti-Israel," especially by American Jews. It is their lives that are on the line. Virtually all of them—male and female, hawk and dove—serve or have served in the Israeli military. And, according to the polls, some 68 percent of them want out of the occupied territories in exchange for peace.

Here in America, the lack of dissent about what is right for Israel could ultimately give Israel's own democracy a bad name. Our Congress tiptoes around the subject, treating all policies of the Israeli government with a respect bordering on reverence. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, knows no such restraints. Prime Ministers are called liars, traitors, sellouts, and thugs. Knesset members call each other, or Israeli policies they oppose, Fascist, Bolshevik, or worse. But let some undergraduate or teaching assistant at Dartmouth or the University of Michigan mouth off about the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and that is something else. As for a member of Congress, forget about it!

The irony, of course, is that the best favor anyone can do for Israel is to help it get back to negotiations. That is because the safest and most prosperous period in Israel's history was when the Oslo peace process was in effect. Its worst period ever has been the 32 months

since Oslo's collapse. One would never know that from the official pronouncements of most of the organizations claiming to speak for American Jews. They routinely label the Oslo period disastrous for Israel, ignoring the facts—facts that tell an entirely different story.

Although Oslo took almost four years for full implementation, it had largely succeeded by the fall of 1997. By then, with the assistance of the CIA, Israeli-Palestinian security co-operation had essentially eliminated terrorism. In fact, between September 1997 and the collapse of Oslo in the late fall of 2000, just seven people were killed by terrorists in Israel. This was not because Hamas and Islamic Jihad did not try to launch attacks; it is because the Palestinian Authority engaged in a virtual civil war with the terrorists to thwart those attacks and tipped the Israelis off in advance of them.

As a result, Israel, in the period just prior to Oslo's end, was safer than at any period in its history. Tourism was at an all-time high. Unemployment was remarkably low. The economy was bursting with foreign investment. And the international community, including Arab states, was building economic and diplomatic links to the Jewish state.

**ISRAEL, IN THE PERIOD JUST PRIOR TO OSLO'S END, WAS SAFER THAN AT ANY PERIOD IN ITS HISTORY. TOURISM WAS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH. UNEMPLOYMENT WAS REMARKABLY LOW. THE ECONOMY WAS BURSTING WITH FOREIGN INVESTMENT.**

Comparing today's situation to the Oslo period is almost gratuitous. Deaths from acts of terror since the collapse of Oslo have reached 787 in 32 months (versus those seven in the previous three years). The economy is so bad that Israel is seeking loan guarantees from the United States to help stave off disaster. Unemployment is at 11 percent. For-

eign investment has dried up. The tourist industry has collapsed. Jerusalem, which had blossomed during the Oslo years, has a depressed feel and look that is reminiscent of the pre-1967 period, when it was a divided city. (In fact, it is almost as divided today as it was then, with few Israelis venturing into the Arab areas and vice versa.) In short, the last 32 months have been disastrous for Israel.

As of this writing, one glimmer of hope remains. It is President Bush's road map for Middle East peace. The road map was drafted by the so-called Quartet (the United States, European Union, Russia, and United Nations) but, once embraced by Bush, it became his. In point of fact, the Quartet's draft was designed to implement Bush's vision for Mideast peace as enunciated in Bush's major speech of June 24, 2002, in which he stated that the United States's goal is "two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

The road map was designed to avoid the pitfalls of earlier U.S. efforts, such as the plans drafted by former Sen. George Mitchell (D-Maine) and CIA Director George Tenet. Both those attempts to achieve peace floundered when Prime Minister Sharon declared that Israel

would not fulfill its obligations until the Palestinians fulfilled theirs. The Palestinians said the opposite.

The Bush road map gets around this problem by dumping sequential compliance in favor of parallel moves that happen concurrently. Palestinians must end anti-Israel violence, while at the same time Israelis must pull back from areas

reoccupied during the *intifada* and freeze settlements. Instead of waiting for Sharon to deem Palestinian efforts to combat terror sufficient for a reciprocal measure, the sponsors of the road map assume that role for themselves (and specifically for the United States). Neither side can refuse to meet its obligations by claiming that the other has not acted.

As for Phase 2 of the road map, the establishment of a provisional and, ultimately, a permanent Palestinian state in a few years, these steps will only occur if the two sides remain in full compliance with the road map's provisions at each stage of the way. There is no prescribed solution. The plan is entirely "performance driven." If one or the other side fails to perform, the road map will be tossed in the back seat and forgotten, and it is the United States that will determine who is or is not performing.

The bottom line is that Israel has nothing to fear from the road map. On the contrary, it is the only available way out of the horrific *status quo* for both sides. It will succeed if President Bush sticks to his guns. But will he?

One can only hope. But no one should doubt the opposition Bush will face if he persists. So far, the signs look good. And, as those who opposed his tax cuts and the war with Iraq know, this president is nigh unstoppable when he believes in the cause. His cause this time is the long-term survival of Israel and, of course, America's interests in the Muslim world. My guess is that Bush will stay the course. If he does, he will help redefine just what is considered pro-Israel and what will be understood as perpetuating a *status quo* that is disastrous for Israel, for the Palestinians, and for our own country. ■

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# Muggeridge, a Century On

Reassessing the British contrarian

By R. J. Stove

WHEN MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE died on Nov. 14, 1990—following, as we know now but did not know then, years of Alzheimer's—his place in literature appeared unassailable. Deferential obituarists (the present writer among them) therefore assumed Muggeridge's right to rank alongside G.K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis in the rare and excruciatingly difficult genre of best-selling Christian apologetics that actually win over hordes of atheists. In 2003, with the centenary of Muggeridge's birth just behind us, such enthusiasm is hard to recapture.

Frank Brownlow, Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College curtly dismissed Muggeridge in the March 1997 *Chronicles*: "He became a participant in the very cultural developments he liked to inveigh against. ... Muggeridge's writing, while praised in his time, does not age well. It suffers from facility and a monotonous, all-too-predictable egotistic point of view. Readable in short doses, it palls at any length." Twenty years earlier, in Britain's *New Statesman*, Clive James had snapped, "He has never raised an issue without leaving it more clouded than it was before. Far from being stimulating even when wrong, he is misleading even when right." The appeal of a Muggeridge—"Saint Mugg," as encomiasts and scoffers combined to call him after he junked agnosticism—might well be fully graspable only by those old enough to remember his strenuously iconoclastic lecture tours and TV talking-head role. Perhaps, in that most vexing of clichés, "you just had to be there."

One who was there, Richard Ingrams, published *Muggeridge: The Biography* in 1995. Ingrams had founded in 1961, and for years controlled, *Private Eye*, the Bible of that grunge-satiric London journalism that is Ingrams's *de facto* religion. Muggeridge backed *Private Eye* from the start. So Ingrams predictably regards Muggeridge with unalloyed esteem, interpreting him as grunge-satire's John the Baptist. (This casting decision bathes in a hideous light Ingrams's notions of the Messiah, but on that particular blasphemy we need not dwell.) At once quick-witted and humorless—surely the worst possible pair of attributes for any Muggeridge biographer—Ingrams even accepts at face value Muggeridge's boasts of freedom from personal ambition. Unless we take (as Ingrams takes) "ambition" to denote simply "craving for peerages, chauffeur-driven limousines, etc.," Muggeridge's brags in this context carry about as much conviction as those of his hate-object T. E. Lawrence, to whom in every respect but the physical Muggeridge (as tall as Lawrence was short) bore so marked a similitude.

Of Lawrence, cynics quipped that he could never vanish into private life unless a camera was rolling. Muggeridge would have demanded at least ten cameras rolling—and, towards the end, satellite coverage as well—before he condescended to disappear into anonymity. But the same principle underlay both men's behavior: if you sabotage your own career often enough and noisily enough, some *deus ex machina* will protect you from your ideas' dottiest logical conse-



quences. This belief is compatible with great authorial talent of a hectic kind and with (as friends of both Lawrence and Muggeridge have attested) extreme lovability. How it can be compatible with unambitiousness defies conjecture, though it easily coexists with extravagant claims for either man's merit purely as a thinker, claims made by those with an Ingrams-like determination to maintain their more parochial adolescent crushes until *rigor mortis* strikes.

Inside Ingrams's hagiography is a figure of real distinction wildly signaling to be let out. The son of a Fabian activist who eventually became a Labour parliamentarian, Muggeridge married into Fabianism's royal dynasty: his wife's aunt being Beatrice Webb, no less. Mrs. Webb resented him and, later, acutely feared him. A smooth-tongued journalist of crapulous indiscipline, raging libido, and periodic incoherent yearnings for the Roman Church was not the kind of in-law she favored. Admittedly it required gifts well above average to shine in a literary generation that included Waugh, Orwell, Anthony Powell, Graham Greene, and Roy Campbell. Still, Muggeridge's dilatoriness continues to astound. By 1950 Waugh, Powell, and Greene had all become leading novelists; Campbell had adorned English verse with quantities of heroic lampooning little (if at all) inferior to Dryden's; and Orwell lay on his deathbed. What, by 1950, had Muggeridge done? One deed alone warranting general note; his other doings justify Nancy Mitford's frigid rebuke, "There is no sadder spectacle than that of a lettered beachcomber."

The deed warranting note was his permanently valuable reportage of Stalin's Ukrainian famine: reportage immortalized by his book *Winter in Moscow* and by meditation after meditation in his later years. If Stalin's exterminationist malice is now conceded by all except the lunatic, it was not thus conceded in

1933, when Walter Duranty's lying for the *New York Times* enjoyed the sanction of public trust. Muggeridge compared the images of Ukrainian starvation to stigmata. They at first exhausted his capacity, not just for indignation, but for other strong emotion. His World War II service, briefly in Paris (where André Gide tried unavailingly to interest him in little boys) but mostly in Africa, comprised boozing jags tempered by neurasthenic adultery and aggravated by his Army Intelligence tasks. Alcoholism did him no lasting bodily or cognitive damage. Rather, epic hangovers enabled him to work up a lather of Dostoevskyan self-reproach without the tiresome chore of Dostoevskyan piety.

If television had stayed uninvented, Muggeridge would have remained little more than a footnote to Soviet studies. Yet in British TV production milieus of the 1950s—endearingly haphazard, self-consciously daring, still with a pronounced atmosphere of genteel wartime raffishness—Muggeridge thrived; they were probably the only milieus where he could have thrived. They solved his money problems. (Though in 1957 his jibing at the Royal Family's expense—

IT REQUIRED GIFTS WELL ABOVE AVERAGE TO SHINE IN A LITERARY GENERATION THAT INCLUDED WAUGH, ORWELL, ANTHONY POWELL, GRAHAM GREENE, AND ROY CAMPBELL.

jibing anodyne by present standards, but outrageous by 1957's—temporarily forced him off the air.) And they did wider good, in that the fame they accorded him made his memoirs *Chronicles of Wasted Time* one of the unlikely successes modern British publishing can show. Concerning the *Chronicles*'s significance, lines from Ruskin remain apt: "This is the best of me ... *this* I saw, and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory." Muggeridge's need

to spare his wife's and his mistresses' feelings made him a master at wrapping his less creditable activities in yards of deepest-purple prose, intensifying the dreamlike effect of the whole. The resultant artistic self-discipline, combined with his diligence in meeting all the world's leading powerbrokers, gave his reminiscences a virtue that many nobler scribes seek in vain: unstoppable readability.

Outside the *Chronicles*, Muggeridge frequently showed himself on top form when simply throwing off aphorisms like a latter-day Oscar Wilde. Therapeutic servitude has seldom been epitomized in fewer words than Muggeridge's "I asked for bread and was given a tranquilizer." Eisenhower's Secretary of State irked millions by his Pecksniffian bombinating; Muggeridge alone coined the phrase, "Dull, duller, Dulles." Calling Harold Macmillan "Macmothballs" bespoke, as well as a finely tuned ear, a proper appreciation of that dignitary's most embarrassing sin: his obsessive belief in fending off the Grim Reaper by one more paroxysm of modishness. Part of such squibs' charm is in the sheer enjoyment that they obviously brought

to their creator as well as their audience. Muggeridge, give him credit, was a great enjoyer. (Bertrand Russell, amid squeaks of indignation about anti-Communist "witch-hunting," bet Muggeridge £20 that Joe McCarthy would become president. Muggeridge happily accepted the bet, pocketed the money, and relished this additional proof of Russell's paranoia.)

But mere wisecracks do not a writer make. More sustained invective poured

forth when Muggeridge overcame his nausea for long enough to contemplate college students' moral arrogance. While the last-named is, heaven knows, an easy enough target—anyone who cannot ridicule it should abandon literature altogether and stick to crochet or tiddly-winks—it has seldom inspired such eloquence as the following, from Muggeridge's farewell address (1968) as Edinburgh University's Rector:

[In today's academe] all is prepared for a marvelous release of youthful creativity; we await the great works of art, the high-spirited venturing into new fields of perception and understanding—and what do we get? The resort of any old, slobbering debauchee anywhere in the world at any time—dope and bed. ... So, dear Edinburgh students, this is likely to be the last time I address you, and this is what I want to say—and I don't really care whether it means anything to you or not ...

No doubt, long after I am gone someone will be saying, on some indestructible BBC program like *Any Questions*, a touch more abortion, another year at school, and birth control pills given away with the free morning milk, and all will be well. What are we to do about it, this crazy relapse into moral chaos and dementia? I never met a man made happy by money or worldly success or sensual indulgence, still less by the stupefaction of drugs or alcohol. Yet we all, in one way or another, pursue these ends, as the advertiser well knows.

Each reader must decide for himself whether this prose's power is seriously compromised by posthumous revelations that in "slobbering debauchee" sta-

tus, Muggeridge left all but the most erotomaniac sophomore at the starting post.

One instance of Muggeridge's fundamental philosophic weakness will serve. His 1962 causerie "I Like Dwight" purports to eulogize the miscellaneous journalism of his almost exact contemporary Dwight Macdonald, whose unsuccessful attempt to obtain *Encounter's* editorship he had supported. Unfortunately it never confronts the awkward fact that by the polymath Macdonald's standards of erudition—standards which enabled him to discuss Milton with poets, Eisenstein with *cinéastes*, and Theloni- us Monk with jazz connoisseurs—Muggeridge was barely literate. The latter has good clean fun at Macdonald's imprudent assertion that from the spirit actuating Joyce, Picasso, Stravinsky, and T. S. Eliot "has come whatever is alive in our culture today": "What, one asks oneself, is there 'alive in our culture today' (assuming that anything is) that derives from that grisly quartet? Nothing that I know of." Fair enough, maybe, if you suppose that Eliot wrote nothing after "The Wasteland" and Stravinsky nothing before "Pulcinella." (Muggeridge's personal acquaintanceship with either man's corpus was, shall we say, limited.) But then Muggeridge moves from boisterous abuse to the following bizarre rhetoric:

It is important to recognize that in our time man has not written one word, thought one thought, put two notes or two bricks together, splashed color on to canvas or concrete into space, in a manner which will be of any conceivable imaginative interest to posterity.

Let us overlook the incongruity of a 20th-century writer who writes that 20th-century writers cannot write. Let us also refrain from invoking Rilke's poetry, Ravel's music, Rouault's painting, and other achievements that sug-

gest (even if we examine only one letter of the alphabet) that the 20th century, however vile, cannot have been wholly irredeemable. Let us bring, instead, to Muggeridge's outburst a sense of political history. Muggeridge, far from suppressing that sentence as a hasty indiscretion, solemnly republished it between hard covers in 1966. Within little more than a decade his view of what to do with modern Western culture had been forcibly enacted, by a certain Pol Pot, at the cost of a mere three million corpses. This news should itself have taught Muggeridge anti-intellectualism's fundamentally totalitarian nature. It did nothing of the sort. At least Yeats, rendered squeamish by his own responsibilities as blood-drenched Dublin's bard, had the courage to ask, "What if words of mine sent out / Certain men the English shot?" If Muggeridge felt the slightest remorse over the logical continuum between his own demands for a cultural *tabula rasa* and the Khmer Rouge's Year Zero, he kept such remorse a secret.

Ultimately it is Muggeridge's mental laziness, whether in his homilies (*Jesus Rediscovered, Something Beautiful for God*) or in much of his secular *oeuvre*, that shocks most. Reason, dogma, first principles, deductive logic he found too hard and time-consuming to tackle. Emoting was far easier—and, most important, looked far better on-screen. Given the choice between citing a hard fact and citing a mawkish feeling, he infallibly chose the mawkish feeling. He opposed contraception not on doctrinal, biological or demographic grounds but because—wait for it—women taking the Pill "have dead eyes." (Clive James retorted with forgivable asperity that numerous 19th-century women after annual childbirths had fairly dead eyes too.) The characteristic Muggeridge theological disquisition amounted to no more than compiling a list of pin-up idols: ranging from the irrefutably noble

(Dr. Johnson, Solzhenitsyn, Mother Teresa) via the dubiously sane (Tolstoy, Kierkegaard) to ... um, Hugh Kingsmill, anyone? (Hugh Kingsmill, since you ask, was an obscure epigrammatist and layabout in whom Muggeridge managed, uniquely, to discern "a combination of Bismarck, Talleyrand, Metternich, Gladstone, Disraeli, Lincoln, and Cromwell." The words are Muggeridge's own, describing Arthur Schlesinger's and Theodore Sorensen's view of JFK.)

Eliot described his own battle towards religious conviction as "costing not less than everything." Muggeridge's cost less than nothing. Small matters like the Christian's duty to believe in Christ's Incarnation and Virgin Birth escaped Muggeridge's notice even after 1982, the year he converted to what he imagined was Catholicism. (His refusal to confess his sins, on the eccentric grounds that his published—and bowdlerized—diaries had already been read by the padre concerned, raises the question of whether he ever meant his Catholicism as more than one last Fourth-Estate publicity-stunt.) He flabbergasted American theologian Francis Schaeffer by blurting out this:

[Believing in Mary's perpetual virginity is] entirely different from saying that I believe that a particular female, without anything else happening, conceived and bore a child and that that child was Jesus. In other words, I see it as an artistic truth rather than an historical truth.

So now we know. This is Christendom. This is the creed for which Peter suffered crucifixion upside-down; this is what underpinned Augustine, Aquinas, medieval scholasticism, and Gothic architecture; this is what gave us Palestrina's, Handel's, and Bach's sacred masterpieces; this is what sustained Solzhenitsyn, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, Cardinal Mindszenty, and the gulag's gib-

bering zeks. It turns out to be an *artistic truth*, if you please: a glorified Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In this respect, Muggeridge might have benefited from further study of Wilde, who did, after all, pertinently observe, "A thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it."

Alas for Muggeridge's long-term repute, his output's high levels of affectation and sheer wind had been predicted almost two millennia ago by a rather more perceptive proselyte named Saint Paul:

For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but, following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. They will stop listening to the truth and wander off to fables. ■

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## In Bed With the Pentagon

An ABC correspondent covers the war coverage

By Charles Glass

"LIGHTS! CAMERA! COMBAT!" British *Variety's* page-one headline must thrill the news executives who expended their shareholders' treasure and some of their employees' blood to bring the war to the little screen. "Iraq Passes Its Screen Test." Peter Bart's story in the entertainment industry's Koran notes that "viewed as showbiz, the Iraq war was a winner, as expertly executed as it was scripted." Who wrote the script? The journalists or the Pentagon? Bart wonders about razzmatazz war coverage, "Why was it discomfiting to watch history cozy up to showbiz?" History is what happened, showbiz is a way of telling it that usually gets it wrong. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend, as John Wayne said. In a movie.

Take the war's number one feel-good story. This was the liberation, not of Baghdad, but of Private Jessica Lynch. It turns out, as the BBC showed recently, that her rescuers broke into a Nasiriya

hospital firing blanks and video cameras at ... well, at no one, apart from frightened hospital staff and patients. Iraqi troops left a day before the rescue team arrived. Private Lynch's Iraqi doctors, who said she was not beaten or mistreated in the hospital, told the BBC that they hid her in an ambulance and tried to get her to an American checkpoint. The U.S. troops fired on the ambulance, and the doctors rushed her back. The next day, Dr. Anmar Uday told the BBC, "We heard the noise of helicopters. We were surprised. Why do this? There was no military, there were no soldiers in the hospital. It was like a Hollywood film." It is a Hollywood film.

Here is another story yet to be told. How many people died? In Washington, they will tell you—as they say 58,152 people died in Vietnam, ignoring two million dead natives—that 185 people were killed. That is, 185 American and British soldiers. How many Iraqis died?



Who cares? After all, they were liberated. Dead or alive, they should have been ecstatic.

That brings us to another little story. The Iraqis, containing their ecstasy, forgot to welcome the American armed forces to their country. Operation Iraqi Freedom was not the 1944 liberation of Paris. No one expected Muslim girls to kiss our boys and pour champagne, but there could have been some tea and hearty handshakes from the men. There was no tea. No handshakes. There were snipers. And looters. Oh, and mullahs telling them to get the hell out of town.

## OUR MINDS WERE EMBEDDED IN THE PENTAGON'S BRAND OF PATRIOTISM LONG BEFORE OUR BODIES WERE EMBEDDED WITH THE TROOPS.

From time to time during my last few months in Iraq, I did a little channel surfing in the odd hotel that had satellite television. It was mesmerizing to compare two different wars. One was the battlefield from the Anglo-American satellite channels—CNN, Fox, Sky, BBC World. The other was what the rest of the world saw. Anglo-America watched brave soldiers confronting the Arab equivalent of the Wehrmacht, soldier's eye views of Iraqi marksmen firing from Ba'ath Party buildings, aerial perspectives of smart bombs finding their targets, helicopters and tanks blowing up buildings, convoys rolling north, excited GIs breaking into Saddam International Airport, the American flag raised at Umm Qasr, and another draped over one of Saddam's many monumental faces. This was glorious war: bravery, risk, humor, and all in color. What the rest of the world observed was not a war at all. Channels from Chile to China showed an unopposed invasion of a weak country. On stations that broadcast in every language but English, men

pulled infant corpses from the debris of their houses, women wept over their dead children, men limped away from bomb craters without hands or eyes, and people lay bleeding or burned on hospital floors.

An Abu Dhabi Television cameraman walked for a half hour beside a woman on an empty road near Basra with her young children. He simply allowed her to speak, and she did. She cursed the Americans. Until they arrived, she and her children had water and food and a house. Now, they were wandering in the desert, thirsty and frightened. She

demanding to know where the Arab and Muslim worlds were while her babies starved. Abu Dhabi TV's footage of her was broadcast on many other satellite stations. If you are bold enough to travel outside the U.S. this summer, do not be surprised when the foreigners you meet offer a different take on Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It is, I suppose, our fault. Most of us who covered the war for American and British media worked within the Pentagon's terms of reference. Our minds were embedded in its brand of patriotism long before our bodies were embedded with the troops. Correspondents of Qatar's al-Jazeera, Abu Dhabi Television, and France's TF-1 may have come to a place called Iraq, as we did. But they did not see triumph and glory. They saw something squalid and cruel.

"These embedded media," the Pentagon's document for "Public Affairs Guidance on Embedded Media" says, in Paragraph 2A, "will live, work and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-

depth coverage of U.S. forces in combat and related operations." About 600 journalists joined American and British units during the war. The Pentagon fed them, transported them, confided in them, and relied on them not to break trust with the men and women whose lives they shared.

Washington has had embeds for years. They're called the White House press corps. But it goes back further. "Embedding is not new," Phillip Knightley told a conference on Media and War at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts recently. Knightley wrote the standard work on war coverage: *The First Casualty*. "There were six correspondents with the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War. They represented the entire British press. They were made honorary officers. They had their own batmen and drivers. They were with the British army the whole time. And theirs was the worst reporting of any war in the twentieth century. Incidentally, they were all knighted." He added that one, Philip Gibbs, later wrote in his memoirs, "[W]e became our own censors." Their lies made it difficult for the British public to believe soldiers' tales of slaughter in the trenches.

Six of the nine journalists who died in combat in Iraq were killed by American fire. (Seven others died in accidents.) For a three-week war, that is an unprecedented journalistic loss. It was not entirely unexpected.

Before the war, the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York recorded its concern for the staff, in particular, of al-Jazeera. Joel Campagna of the CPJ wrote, "[T]he destruction of the station's bureau in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, by U.S. missiles in November 2001 has fueled anxiety about their safety." As well it might. Yosri Fouda of al-Jazeera told the Media and War Conference in London, "We told them where our offices are and asked them, 'Please,

don't hit us again.' We wrote to the Pentagon." But the U.S. bombed al-Jazeera's Baghdad bureau on April 8, killing correspondent Tariq Ayoub and wounding other staff. A half hour later, the U.S. dropped a bomb on Abu Dhabi TV in Baghdad. Later the same day, a U.S. tank blasted away the Reuters office in Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, killing two journalists. American officers justified their actions with the claim that rockets and small arms were fired from the hotel. David Chater of Britain's Sky TV and other western reporters, all of whom had moved from the Rasheed Hotel after Pentagon warnings that it could be a U.S. target, said they neither saw nor heard any firing from the Palestine Hotel.

The Bush administration made clear from the time it decided on war that reporters outside the embed system would not be safe in Iraq. Bush told them to leave on March 6, Ari Fleischer on March 7, Colin Powell on March 15, and Bush again on March 17. General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, warned the U.S. network anchors to pull reporters from Baghdad and the Kurdish north. As early as February 17, Pentagon Public Affairs Officer Victoria Clarke told a meeting of Washington bureau chiefs, "We cannot guarantee their safety and I think most of them recognize that and most of you recognize that but it's worth putting on the record." She added, "For instance, communications targets are very obviously something we would like to take out." The Pentagon is getting the hang of communications, not to mention taking them out. ■

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# Importing Disease

America's ailing immigration system

By Matt Hayes

IN JACKSON HEIGHTS, Queens, a doctor works the same miracle each week, sometimes more than once. There is a huge demand for his services, and people from all around the world come to see him. Young men by themselves, or in groups of two, make their way under the elevated segment of the Number 7 train that screeches above Roosevelt Avenue to a storefront near a Mexican restaurant. There they find a civil surgeon who has been licensed by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS—formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service). For a fee, he will provide an "immigration medical" that will change their HIV status from positive to negative. The applicant for legal permanent residence will then use these fake test results to circumvent the statute that has for more than 100 years barred from entry those afflicted with contagious diseases, which now include HIV.

With the Immigration Act of 1891, Congress made aliens afflicted with a disease of public-health significance inadmissible. Our laws have never changed. The United States was, and is, a trendsetter in matters of immigration and public health; to this day, the United Kingdom has no meaningful health test that would prevent the reintroduction of diseases deemed eradicated in First-World nations. Reportedly, the results are that one London borough now has a tuberculosis rate higher than that of China, and twice that of Brazil, and that 95 percent of the UK's hepatitis B cases are imported by immigrants.

While the weak points in America's barriers against immigrant-borne disease—such as public surgeons who take money to fake HIV test results—are troubling, our failure to enforce existing immigration laws is laying the groundwork for a public health disaster that promises to rival that of the United Kingdom. If the UK, which admits 150,000 legal (though medically untested) immigrants a year, has seen a tripling of tuberculosis cases, there is every reason to believe that the U.S. will fare as badly, or worse, with an annual influx of at least 300,000 illegal immigrants whose health is never tested. Add to them an embedded population of eight million illegal immigrants whose desire to remain anonymous inhibits them from contact with any state or local officials, and America today has the potential for the kind of infectious-disease outbreaks not seen for several generations.

Spikes in infectious diseases previously thought near eradication have already been seen. In 2002, Northern Virginia saw a one-year jump of 17 percent in tuberculosis cases, with Prince William County reporting a 188 percent increase over the prior year. State health officials attribute the outbreak to new immigrants and note that new immigrants in particular have introduced drug-resistant strains of the disease to the area. The preceding year, the Indiana University School of Medicine investigated an outbreak of multi-drug-resistant TB in Marion County, Ind. and found its cause to be an influx of Mexican

nationals. At the same time, the Tuberculosis Control Program of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that 64 percent of new tuberculosis cases occurred among immigrants, primarily those from Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Pakistan, Mexico, and China. The Department of Health found that, in Queens, 81 percent of new tuberculosis cases in 2001 were those of immigrants.

America developed the first antibiotic to treat tuberculosis at the University of California in 1939. By 1987, most of the American epidemiological community believed that tuberculosis in the U.S. soon would be vanquished. We may never know how close we came because

the ship and processed through Canada's immigration controls, though some had already managed to make rafts and go ashore before the authorities arrived at the scene. Just a year before, a nearly identical incident occurred in Vancouver's San Josef Bay. That captain was allowed to leave with his ship after discharging the Chinese packed into its hull.

Penetration of the U.S.-Canada border, which is arguably less guarded, longer, and much easier to cross than the U.S.-Mexico border, generates \$10 billion for alien smugglers every year. Unlike the U.S.-Mexico border, which is most often crossed by nationals of Mexico and the countries of Central America,

appears that SARS becomes dormant in hot and cold weather and that it remains in the body (and can make a comeback) even after treatment appears successful and all symptoms have subsided, both of which make it difficult for public health authorities to detect.

The group of people most affected by SARS (natives of China's southern provinces) is the very same group whose members have the greatest contact with the United States and are smuggled into the U.S. from Canada. The disease, which first came to light in November 2002, originated in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong. Before World War II, 90 percent of Chinese in the United States came from Guangdong, and even now people hailing from Guangdong compose the majority of Chinese in the U.S., according to the State Department. Most live in our largest cities: Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Boston. The Guangdong overseas population is also tightly connected to families at home, who make frequent trips to Chinatowns in Canada, Malaysia—and the U.S. By the end of April, SARS had spread beyond Guangdong to Fujian province, the origin of nearly all of the illegal Chinese immigrants that enter the U.S. every year.

Though it may be less a SARS threat than the unprotected U.S.-Canada border, Mexico, too, is dealing with SARS, and with as many as 500,000 people crossing our southern border illegally each year—none of whom ever see a health inspector—it is probably only a matter of time before we experience a SARS outbreak in our southwest.

If it were not enough that America's public health is threatened by a failure to enforce its borders, we have also failed to maintain the beneficial pressures that once existed to bring immigrants into the wider American culture. Large groups of unassimilated immi-

## **IF SARS EMERGES AS ANOTHER IMPORTED EPIDEMIC, IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY COME ACROSS OUR NORTHERN BORDER VIA THE THOUSANDS OF ILLEGAL CHINESE IMMIGRANTS WHO CROSS FROM CANADA.**

the current upsurge in TB cases started soon after. It coincided with the immigration amnesty of 1987, which made 2.1 million illegal aliens legal overnight, 85 percent of whom were citizens of Mexico and the countries of Central America. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the upsurge has been traced to the increase in immigration from Southeast Asia, Mexico and Central America, and Africa.

If Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), emerges as another imported epidemic, it will almost certainly come across our northern border via the tens of thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants who cross from Canada each year. In July of 1999, a rusting Chinese ship entered Nootka Sound, off Vancouver Island, but did not attempt to dock. Canada's Coast Guard was dispatched to investigate. It discovered that the Chinese ship was packed with 123 immigrants. Each was taken from

our border with Canada is the entrance for almost all of America's illegal Chinese immigrants. The most highly trafficked points of entry from Canada into the U.S. are Lake of the Woods, between Minnesota and Ontario, and the various Indian reservations that straddle the St. Lawrence at Massena, New York. The reservation at St. Regis, east and north of Massena, exists at both sides of the border. Canadian Immigration has little authority to prevent anyone from entering the reservation on the Canadian side, and the BCIS has no authority of its own to enter the U.S. side of the reservation to search for aliens. Corrupt members of tribes have reduced some sections of the Canadian border to little more than a line on a map, but when arrangements cannot be made with a tribe member, Chinese have been known to try to navigate Niagara Falls in a rubber raft.

From early experience in Asia, it now



grants are not only importing disease, but once here, are creating public health emergencies through such things as unregulated food businesses. An outbreak of *Brucella melitensis* infections stemming from unpasteurized goat cheese occurred in Texas in 1983. All 29 persons affected were Mexican immigrants: one person died, and 14 others were hospitalized. The cheese had been produced in Mexico and purchased from unlicensed vendors who sold it from their cars. Immigration officials responded by stepping up enforcement efforts and stopping the flow of unpasteurized products.

Then, in 2001, the same infection cropped up again—but from a different source. The Centers for Disease Control reported that 12 Mexicans in Winston-Salem, N.C. contracted listeriosis after eating homemade, unpasteurized cheese or “queso fresco” made in the U.S. by fellow Mexican immigrants. The cheese was unlabeled and sold door to door, out of car trunks, and in Latino grocery stores. Eleven of the 12 people infected were women, and 10 of the women were pregnant when infected. This resulted in five stillbirths, three premature deliveries, and two infected newborns. The eleventh woman was five months postpartum when she presented at a local hospital with meningitis caused by the listeriosis infection.

Similar incidents have been reported in California and other states. The California Department of Health Services contends with persistent outbreaks of lethal pathogens associated with the illegal harvesting and consumption of untested raw oysters. *Vibrio vulnificus* outbreaks have a fatality rate sometimes exceeding 50 percent; from 1983 to 1999, California recorded a 65 percent fatality rate. A three-year review for the Los Angeles area revealed that 94 percent of the patients were primarily Spanish speaking.

Third-World health conditions are

now prevalent in parts of the United States. There is leprosy in El Paso, and the disease has also been reported in San Diego; hepatitis is now rampant along the length of the southern border. There are 1,500 unincorporated neighborhoods in southern Texas, called *colonias*, which make the coldwater tenement seem upscale. Built of corrugated tin and scrap wood, generally without hot running water or paved roads, and ringed by open sewers, they spew raw sewage onto the ground or into ditches, which in turn spawns dengue fever outbreaks. Some *colonias* boast a hepatitis rate among children of nearly 50 percent.

The root of the problem is the failure of successive administrations adequately to stem the influx of illegal aliens. By not addressing this, America is importing the diseases of the Third World and putting its own citizens at risk.

Even now, 110 years of steady public health gains are being reversed, and unless we change course, the price America pays for not enforcing its laws will be measured in American lives. ■

*Matt Hayes is an immigration lawyer and columnist for Fox News. He is the author of The New Immigration Law and Practice.*

## Straussians & Realists

Leo Strauss was not the wisest German refugee.

By Paul Gottfried

IN RECENT WEEKS articles have turned up in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Le Monde*, *Die Welt*, and *Boston Globe*, linking the neo-conservatives in the Bush administration to University of Chicago political theorist Leo Strauss (1899-1973). Apparently, many of those who now advocate American imperial hegemony and a global democratic ideology, e.g., Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Bill Kristol, Robert Kagan, and Abram Shulsky, studied with Strauss or with one of his academic disciples. There is a tie that binds, or so we are told, between this master and his well-placed apostles, and by examining Strauss's core ideas, one should be able to figure out the mentality of Bush's advisors. As someone who has devoted critical works, including a long chapter of a book, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, to Strauss's inter-

pretive approach, I think that such commentators as Seymour Hersh and James Atlas may be making too much of their discovery. The Cold-War liberal platitudes being examined, often infused with phrases that seem drawn from Marxist-Leninism, do not require Leo Strauss as an ultimate explanation. Indeed it is possible to understand these spokesmen for a neoconservative foreign policy and the neo-Wilsonianism to which they appeal without tracing either to a particular interpreter of ancient and modern texts.

But Strauss did help fortify sentiments that already animated his students. Unlike such disciples as Walter Berns and Harry Jaffa, Strauss had no demonstrable interest in the civil rights movement and, as a former sergeant in the German imperial army in the First World War, had none of the impassioned

Teutonophobia attached to his first-generation disciples. What attracted the followers were Strauss's outspoken Jewish nationalism, which his former student George Anastapolo has heroically criticized, his (sometimes ritualistic) paeans to American democracy, particularly in his Walgreen Lectures at the University of Chicago (1949), and his broadsides against moral relativism. In *What is Political Philosophy?* (1959), Strauss aims his fire at "historicism," the belief that historical circumstances determine values, which allegedly have no independent standing. The problem here is that these invectives are directed against straw men. It is hard to find historically minded thinkers who express the views that Strauss attributes to them. Those he castigates, e.g., Edmund Burke, Max Weber, and the legal scholar Hans Kelsen, either said something different from what is ascribed to them about the relation between history and values or simply did not mean what Strauss claims they said.

Strauss expounds what has been called the "doormat theory of the majority." "Political philosophers," a term popularized by Strauss that Aristotle would have rightly rejected (politics, Aristotle

who feel free to tell noble lies as well as hidden truths. It is also an excuse for inflicting on the dead the perspective of the interpreter. All intelligent people in the past, we are led to believe, were like the practitioners of Straussian analysis. If the dead could be brought back they, like their exegetes, would be jolly up the Christian Right and preaching homilies about "human rights." The thought that Straussians themselves are "relativists" has occurred to more than one of their critics; nonetheless, such a criticism may be misplaced. Both the German Jewish refugee, who became a passionate Zionist, and his predominantly Jewish students, who celebrate FDR and Harry Truman, have embodied a particular set of loyalties. What they have done is dress up these loyalties as American patriotism and self-evident truths, while condemning those who resist their sentiments as morally reprehensible.

One long-term reason that Straussians have had their way is that conservatives have generally not looked at what lies behind their rhetoric of conviction. This lack of curiosity goes back before the neoconservative takeover of the American Right—and even before

also traces the U.S. founding back to the atheistic materialism of John Locke, which he defends as being integral to American moral identity.

It may also be asked whether self-described moral relativists are culturally dangerous because of their relativism. What Straussians point to are dishonest leftists, who happily deconstruct traditional value-systems in order to impose their own. Traditionalists are involved in a cultural war—but not against relativists who treat all cultures, including Western Christian civilization, in the same way.

Significantly, another German refugee, Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980), who, like Strauss, taught at the New School for Social Research and the University of Chicago, articulated a position on international relations that is dramatically different from the one identified with the Straussians. Although Morgenthau characterized himself repeatedly as a "Burkean conservative," American movement conservatives have never treated him as one of their own. This is because Straussians, among others, have disparaged Morgenthau as a value-relativist, who presents "American democracy" as the ideology of a particular nation-state. It was his failure to highlight the universal validity of the American creed, plus his view of the Soviet Union as one of two powers in a bipolar struggle, that made this colleague of Strauss unpalatable to the Right. The conservative complaint about him that I heard in the Sixties was that Morgenthau was a "positivist" or "naturalist." Even more damningly, he wrote for the (pre-neoconservative) *New Republic*.

In point of fact, his books, starting with *Politics among Nations* (1947), are full of conservative notions. In *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (1969), Morgenthau warns against the "missionaries of the American experiment," who are replicating Wilson's "cru-

## MORGENTHAU ARTICULATED A POSITION ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THAT IS DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE STRAUSSIANS.

explained, was a non-philosophical, practical activity), present their thoughts in a coded fashion, to avoid censorship and to deceive those who might be corrupted by truth. A long-held Straussian distinction between the "esoteric" and "exoteric" meanings of a text is more than a bizarre, undemonstrated assumption common to Strauss's students. It is, according to Princeton political thinker Stephen Holmes, an expression of overweening arrogance from interpreters

the fear in recent decades of sounding anti-Semitic by criticizing the Straussians' fervent Zionism. Already in the Fifties conservative Christians, particularly Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Thomists, looked to Strauss as a champion against the specter of moral disintegration. Such hyperbole shows no awareness that Strauss ends up ascribing his skepticism to the ancients, for example by emphatically denying that Socrates and Plato believed in eternal forms. He

sade for universal democracy." It was this president who during and after the First World War looked upon American intervention "as the instrument through which America would achieve the purpose for which it was created: to bring the blessing of its own political system to all the world." Morgenthau did not hesitate to pronounce "Wilsonian globalism a curse in American foreign policy." In 1952 he issued the timely admonition: "Forget the crusading notion that any nation, however virtuous and powerful, can have the mission to make the world over in its image." And as early as *Politics among Nations*, he had mocked those whose "propensity for moral and philosophic abstractions has impeded the objective investigation of what other people want."

The commonest attack—perhaps most conspicuously stressed by Straussians—on Morgenthau's perspective is that it conceals an unjustified cynicism toward moral grievances that should offend our sense of decency. Morally decent people should be outraged by acts of mass murder or by the operation of concentration camps to brutalize political dissenters. What Morgenthau, George Kennan, and other political realists seem to be demanding is an American foreign policy that is morally blind.

Two observations: first, political realism is an explicit moral reaction against what realists consider a misguided approach to human relations. What these realists aspire to do is not banish human concerns from international affairs but keep ideological and apocalyptic enthusiasms out of statecraft. Thus in *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau looks back nostalgically to an aristocratic age, when sober gentlemen could deal with issues coolly, insulated from popular passions. In a democratic age, Morgenthau thought that "propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy is inevitable" but also "dangerous."

Second, and equally pertinent, Morgenthau did feel driven to deal positively with the moral aspect of statecraft. In *Dilemmas of Politics* (1958), he explains, "[M]oral principles can never be fully realized but must at best be approximated through the ever tempo-

### MORGENTHAU DID NOT HESITATE TO PRONOUNCE "WILSONIAN GLOBALISM A CURSE IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY."

rary balance of interests." Moreover, "conservatives see in a system of checks and balances a universal principle for all pluralistic societies. It appeals to historic precedent rather than abstract principles and aims at the realization of the lesser evil rather than the absolute good." In what might have been an allusion to the Straussians, Morgenthau expresses the view that "political philosophy, to be fruitful, must make the Aristotelian distinction between what is ideally good and what is good under the circumstances." Indeed one cannot apply international law, according to Morgenthau, without presuming that "identical or complementary interests" among nations, however different they might be in other respects, are possible. Morgenthau contrasted the wicked but canny "power politician" Stalin, "who, unencumbered by considerations of ideological advantage, sought to restore and expand Russia's traditional sphere of power" to the obstinate Wilsonian, FDR. Instead of confronting Stalin with a statement of American geopolitical interest, Roosevelt "defended an abstract philosophic principle, incapable of realization under the circumstances."

There is much that may look worn about Morgenthau's conceptual framework, starting with his time-bound world of nation-states. For better or worse (and I do think it is for worse), the relatively stable order of territorially and cul-

turally discrete states that existed in 19th-century Europe is gone. And the imperial and ideological style of rule that Morgenthau deplored is now incarnated in the American empire and its neo-Wilsonian custodians. At least for the time being, neo-Wilsonians who alter-

nate global imperial tropes with Straussian and Zionist phrases are helping to guide—or confuse—the State Department, or so the national press indicates.

But does the conservative realist Morgenthau remain as relevant as the revolutionary disciples of Strauss? Perhaps he does, in signaling the limits of our present fixations. For it seems doubtful that a country can go on treating foreign relations simply as an extension of reigning buzzwords or of domestic social experiments. This from Walter McDougall, Andrew Bacevich, Robert Tucker, and James Kurth, all of whom have written on the folly of applying American social reforms internationally. World revolution and forced modernization may not be useful ideas on which to base even the foreign policy of a superpower. These are the ideas, however, observes the German newspaper *Die Welt*, that keep showing up in the Straussian agenda for the Bush presidency, which is certainly not about timeless truths. Invariably commentators who begin discussing the Straussians as revivers of classical wisdom end up by talking about their Trotskyism. Straussians in politics are global revolutionaries who hide behind restorationist language. ■

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[The In-Laws]

### *Married to the CIA*

By Steve Sailer

MICHAEL DOUGLAS REPLACES Peter Falk and Albert Brooks takes over for Alan Arkin in "The In-Laws," a loose remake of the 1979 semi-classic comedy.

The first hour is one of the most consistently funny so far in 2003, although that's not saying too much during this fallow year for screen comedies. It doesn't deliver many huge laughs, but the chuckles come almost as fast as in a quality TV sit-com (not that there are as many of those as there were five years ago, either). The yuks aren't terribly novel or insightful, but quantity can be a form of quality.

Sadly, the new film abruptly runs out of jokes with a half hour to go. In contrast, the original built slowly to some memorable comic climaxes.

If you want to sell your screenplay, it's smart to frontload your best material like this, since busy studio executives can hardly be expected to read scripts all the way through. Audiences, however, tend to judge movies more by how they feel as they walk out of the theater, so this bodes poorly for the latest version's word-of-mouth.

Surprisingly, you can watch the two films back to back without getting bored because the renditions share almost nothing besides their general set-up. Arkin/Brooks is a medical professional whose daughter is marrying the son of

Falk/Douglas, who is either a top American secret agent or a con man or both. The extroverted spy lures the staid doctor into a crazed espionage adventure that threatens the big wedding.

It's really more of a spy spoof, but it's being advertised as a bridal flick because Americans love comedies with "wedding" in the title. Our culture has become so casual that nuptials provide one of the few remaining formal occasions that can make indignities and embarrassments so much funnier.

The new screenwriters Nat Mauldin and Ed Solomon chose to use almost no jokes from the original script by the distinguished funnyman Andrew Bergman (of "Blazing Saddles," "Fletch," and "The Freshman" fame). Bergman's script was so finely tuned to the personas of the lovable Falk and the volatile Arkin that almost none of the bits of business were transferable to the alpha-male Douglas and the neurotic Brooks.

"In-Laws" cultists can still crack each other up with just the three words Falk shouts at Arkin: "Serpentine, Shelly, serpentine!" But I couldn't explain why that's so funny in less time than it would take you to watch the movie. The best comedy defies summarization because the humor builds upon on all that went before.

Bergman wrote the spy role as an honesty-challenged variation on Falk's famous Lt. Columbo, the bumbling but resourceful everyman. In contrast, Michael Douglas radiates privilege and success, so Mauldin and Solomon made his character a super-competent CIA operative who enjoys his job as much as Donald Trump loves his. He's not as intriguing as Falk's character, but he fits Douglas better.

The other role wasn't fleshed out much beyond a blunt-spoken masculinity made mildly famous by Arkin's per-

fect comic timing, but Albert Brooks gave the 2003 writers a richer, quirkier target.

Brooks (whose real name is, and I'm not making this up, "Albert Einstein") has enjoyed a long career as a comic, actor, writer, and director, with 1991's "Defending Your Life" being perhaps the highlight. He might well have become a huge star if Woody Allen hadn't beaten him to the Jewish worrywart persona. What's distinctive about Brooks' shtick is his patented slow burn, but that would have worked better in the more deliberately paced 1979 movie.

Together, Douglas and Brooks generate decent screen chemistry, although they aren't in the class of their predecessors.

Other differences between the 1979 and 2003 films illustrate changes in American culture. For example, the spy now has a beautiful young sidekick so we can watch her beat up the other characters. Back in 1979, few imagined that scenes of pretty girls hurting people would ever appeal to more than a limited (indeed, fetishistic) audience, but they now seem to be an indispensable part of summer multiplex movies.

The bad guy in the first movie was General Garcia, the lunatic dictator of a banana republic. These days, fortunately, there aren't that many old-line *generalissimos* left in power. Plus, the only thing the new Hollywood dreads more than being insensitive to Hispanics is starring them in movies. (Witness the striking lack of Latinos in the otherwise super-multiethnic "Matrix Reloaded"). So, the updated villain is a crime boss from—you guessed it—the one nation we're perfectly free to laugh at nowadays: France.

Arkin played a rich dentist, but Brooks is a podiatrist, perhaps because there aren't many wealthy dentists left. By

selflessly promoting fluoride toothpaste, America's dentists have greatly reduced the number of cavities that provided their economic bread and butter. A noble endeavor. ■

Rated PG-13 for suggestive humor, language, some drug references, and action violence.  
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## BOOKS

[*The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, Fareed Zakaria, W.W. Norton & Company, 256 pages]

### Guarding Liberty from Democracy

By Roger Scruton

ANCIENT WRITERS on political themes would seldom recommend a purely democratic constitution on the grounds that, unless checked by powerful countervailing forces, democracy could at any moment degenerate into mob rule. The argument was refined by later thinkers, and notably in the 19th century by Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, both of whom warned against the "tyranny of the majority." Unless the constitution protects the rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities, they argued, democratic choice could threaten anyone at any time—as it did in Hitler's Germany. Put another way, the argument tells us that there is nothing inherently liberal in popular choice and that individual freedom might be better protected under an aristocracy than when exposed to the whims of democratic resentment. Indeed, that is what Edmund Burke thought and what he showed to be the case in his great study of the French Revolution.

Although the argument is familiar—and indeed no more than plain common sense—it is constantly forgotten by modern people, who seize on popular choice as the one criterion of legitimacy, for fear of otherwise endorsing the rule of elites and offending the official doctrine of human equality.

In this well-argued and far-ranging survey, *Newsweek International* editor Fareed Zakaria shows the damage that is being done by this un-nuanced pursuit of the democratic idea and argues once again for a society in which elites are accorded their proper place and esteemed for what they are—the true guardians of individual freedom and the ones who have the greatest stake in maintaining law, order, and accountability in the public realm. His argument is particularly pertinent now, when allied forces are attempting to bring freedom to Iraq by imposing democratic procedures on its people. As Zakaria points out, democracy could as well lead to an elected dictatorship of mullahs as to a modern civil society. For democracy without the rule of law is mob rule, and the rule of law is not built by democratic means.

Elected dictatorships, which extinguish opposition, destroy the political process too. It is only where people are free to dissent that genuine democratic choice is possible. Hence liberty should come higher than democracy in the wish list of our politicians. You can have liberty without democracy, but not democ-

gence of a socially mobile middle class. That is why the transition to democracy is successful in countries with a per capita GDP of \$3,000 to \$6,000 but not in countries where it is significantly less.

The argument here is pertinent and fascinating. As Zakaria makes clear, there is all the difference in the world between a country where this relatively high GDP is achieved by the enterprise of the citizens and a country where it comes simply from selling off some natural resource like oil. The high GDP of Saudi Arabia is a kind of political illusion since it does nothing to indicate the emergence of a resourceful middle class or the demand for freedom, law, and citizenship that such a class will inevitably make. Thanks to oil, Saudi Arabia exists in a state of feudal hypostasis, even though it can treat its citizens—who are not true citizens but subjects—to a middle-class lifestyle.

As it proceeds, Zakaria's argument turns increasingly towards the condition of America and the damage that untrammelled democratization is doing, as he sees it, to American social and political institutions. Here he brings home a truth that was already very much in the minds of the Founding Fathers, influenced as they were by Montesquieu's conception of the separation of powers. Democracy, he argues, is intrinsically hostile to elites, but it also requires them. For no democracy can survive without a rule of law, without offices and dignities that refuse to be swayed by popular pas-

NO DEMOCRACY CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT A **RULE OF LAW** AND WITHOUT THE KIND OF PUBLIC SERVANTS WHOSE **SOCIAL POSITION IS SUFFICIENTLY SECURE** THAT THEY CAN SEE **SERVICE AS ITS OWN REWARD**.

racy without liberty: such is the lesson of European history. Before imposing democratic regimes, therefore, we should ensure that civil liberty is properly entrenched in a rule of law, a rotation of offices, and the freedom to dissent. These institutions tend to arise naturally, Zakaria argues, with the emer-

sions, without the kind of public servants whose social position is sufficiently secure that they can see service as its own reward. In short, democracies need to create their own form of aristocracy.

This the Americans had done, Tocqueville thought, through the dignities bestowed on the judiciary and through

the many small associations that conferred social standing at the local level on those who embarked on public service. But, Zakaria argues, the law has lost its dignity now that the democratic idea has taken possession of it. In a country where all have access to the law, litigation becomes a scramble for profit, and lawyers become speculative businessmen for whom justice has no special value. Indeed, Zakaria finds the pressure of democratization to be a downward-directed force that lowers the social, cultural, and intellectual level of every institution, from church to newspaper, and from Senate to school.

Some might dismiss the later parts of Zakaria's book as merely pessimistic and valedictory. For certainly, many of the things of which he complains seem too deeply established in modern culture to be eradicated by any political decision, and many of them bring benefits to the electorate as well as costs. Nevertheless, he is surely right in his insistence that democratization is not enough, that institutions and offices must be rescued from popular access and popular taste if liberty is to be protected, and that the democratization of culture has undermined much of the dignity of modern America. I would go further and suggest that what motivates the hostility of Islamic terrorists is not America's material and political success but the flagrant democratization of those spheres that piety has traditionally protected. As Zakaria is aware, democratization seeks to turn every value into a price and then to bid down the price to the lowest that the market will sustain. This has happened to culture through the TV sit-com and chat-show, through MTV and the music video, through the Internet, and above all through pornography, protected by lawyers who invoke a constitution intended precisely to forbid such things. And it is these products of the moron culture that have the greatest and most shocking impacts on pious Muslims.

Zakaria's book is full of well-observed examples. His keen intelligence and eye for illustrative facts make his book as

instructive as it is challenging. Beneath his lament the reader feels "the sharp compassion of the healer's art"—a keen desire to help his fellow human beings and to restore the kind of order in which his own altruistic energies would not be wasted. Even at its most pessimistic, therefore, *The Future of Freedom* sheds a ray of hope. For it reminds us that, after all, public spirit can still be found in America and—to the glory of that great country—can fill the soul of an American citizen brought up as a Muslim in India. ■

*Roger Scruton is a philosopher and former editor of the Salisbury Review (UK). His most recent book is The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat.*

[*Terror and Liberalism*, Paul Berman, W.W. Norton & Company, 214 pages]

## An Imperialism for the Left

By Scott McConnell

JUST AS THERE ARE former Cold-War conservatives now skeptical about the foreign policy of the Bush administration, so are there liberals and leftists passionate for a New American Empire. This dispensation has been evident since the first Gulf War, but twelve years later the reshuffling of positions and allies is more pronounced. Many liberals joined with neoconservatives to support NATO's war to separate the province of Kosovo from Serbia. After Sept. 11, left-wing hawks have sought more ambitiously to reconfigure the war against Saddam Hussein and fundamentalist Islam into the shape of the "Good War" against Nazi Germany and imperial Japan—that is, as a war of "progressives" against totalitarian fascism.

In the hands of the most talented of them, this is an interesting argument. As

a prime example, Paul Berman's *Terror and Liberalism* is a wide ranging, sometimes witty, and often incisive polemic for the idea that the fate of the free world depends on a decisive Western victory over fundamentalist Islam. It is more subtle than the writing of many of the hawks who (recognizing the utility of an ally from the Left) have embraced his book, and a far better argument for pre-emptive war than President Bush makes himself. *Terror and Liberalism* has much to interest those who might disagree with its particulars and its general thrust.

Berman, once a socialist of the *Dissent* stripe, explains that he is above all not a "realist" who chooses foreign policy positions based on a cold-blooded assessment of the national interests of the United States. He supported the first Gulf War not because Saddam Hussein had invaded one oil rich country and threatened to invade more but because he thought Saddam was a fascist. He argued for an "anti-fascist" war on "progressive" grounds. *Terror and Liberalism* is an expansion of that argument: it vigorously defends a liberal vision of the free society (in which the various social spheres—religion, science, politics, private life—are able to operate autonomously from one another, with no central guiding hand). It dwells on the weaknesses of the European non-communist Left in facing up to fascism (though it suffered from a lack of realism). He makes good sport with the fascination of certain European intellectuals with the Palestinian cause and explores the writings of Sayyid Qutb, a seminal figure of militant fundamentalist Islam.

For a book that is essentially about contemporary politics, it has a pleasing range—touching on Paul Faure (a forgotten French socialist) and Leon Blum, (less forgotten), to Anthony Crossman and Arthur Koestler (representing "The God that Failed" contingent of former communists), to contemporary figures like the Nobel-Prize-winner Jose Saramago, the South African and Parisian novelist Breytan Breytenbach,



and many others. This distinguishes it from more typical pro-war arguments: Berman evidently believes that European thought should not be ignored, even by the "world's only superpower."

Despite this breadth, *Terror and Liberalism* is infused with the single-mindedness of a political pamphlet. Berman's

subtitle for his work might be "Totalitarian Anti-Liberals from St. John the Divine to Sayyid Qutb"—all equally foes of freedom, modernity, Jews.

There is an attractive daring to this, and writers should not fear pursuit of connections that are not readily obvious. Berman is also right when he

stood by the more sophisticated of colonial administrators at least since the 1920s. Students from the colonized Middle East (or Indochina) tended to gravitate to revolutionary extremist doctrines in London and Paris far more readily than they absorbed measured liberalism or prudent conservatism. Skeptics about empire (and the British and French colonial offices had them) concluded that great forces of culture and history made the non-West irredeemably different from the West, had produced "different men." Berman does not explain how America's empire builders might avoid this pitfall.

For Berman, both the Ba'ath Party ideology and fundamentalism are cut from the same cloth: the revolt against liberalism and freedom that arose in Russia, then moved westward after the 1918 Armistice, did not die with the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989—it just assumed different form, migrated from Berlin to Moscow, then on to Tehran and Cairo and Baghdad. Berman notes "totalitarian politics always end up as a revolt against the liberal values of the West; that is their purpose."

He fleshes this out with the most lucid short account I have seen of Sayyid Qutb, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and a Karl Marx figure of contemporary

**BERMAN THROWS EVERYTHING HE CAN REACH INTO THE POT. TODAY'S ENEMIES ARE OF A KIND WITH THOSE WHO RAILED AGAINST THE COSMOPOLITAN AND BOURGEOIS AS FAR BACK AS THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.**

thesis is that The West—or more, the whole idea of freedom—is threatened by an implacable totalitarian foe; that we are in the dark days of 1941 all over again. The foe cannot be worn down by containment, or the passage of time, or by police measures to uproot terrorists, or the co-option of the issues terrorist use to mobilize supporters.

Why? Because the foe is the eternal enemy of freedom. Saddam and the Ba'ath Party, the heirs of the Muslim Brotherhood, are, for Berman, both direct descendants the fascisms of the 1930s. It is the same totalitarianism all over again, in Islamic guise: the Ba'athi and the fundamentalists, eternally opposed to "the liberal values of the West."

In making this case Berman throws everything he can reach into the pot. Today's enemies are of a kind with those who railed against the cosmopolitan and bourgeois as far back as the Book of Revelation of St. John the Divine. Their spirit is found in many French revolutionaries, in some of the pre-Bolshevik Russian terrorists, in Lenin, Stalin, and Saddam. In the period right after World War II, there arose a reading of German history that tried to wind everything down to a single thread, shaping every major social, cultural, or intellectual development "from Luther to Hitler" into a precursor or explanation of the eventual Nazi seizure of power. Berman, in his search for the connecting tissues of the eternal fascist enemy, does this one better: a plausible

argues that most intellectuals in the modern world do not have a single national or cultural identity but rather many overlapping ones. This may be especially so for those hailing from Islamic countries, where intellectual life grew under the shadow of Western imperial dominance. Berman is not idle to point out that the founders of the Ba'ath parties and the early Islamic radicals did some borrowing from the European far Right, (though more was borrowed from the Left, and a Marxism imported from Paris or London has been, until now, the more deadly import). The drawbacks of cross-cultural intellectual fertilization were under-



"Well, congratulations—I didn't know there was a Pulitzer Prize for memos."

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Islamist radicalism. Qutb, Berman says, understood the West well, indeed had penetrated to the heart of meaning of separation of Church and State. He opposed Christianity and the West not because Western societies had failed to measure up to their professed values, but because of the values themselves.

Berman also makes, in passing, a telling point about the pockets of irrationality within the West. He scores easily against European intellectuals who have embraced the Palestinian cause and makes the arresting argument that European sympathy for the Palestinians seemed to peak when the pace of suicide terror bombings was most intense. Something is attractive to intellectuals about such random violence, he implies, adding that many in Europe seem to have lost interest as Sharon's harsh repression took hold and the bombings diminished, though in terms of their suffering, the Palestinian situation had been made far worse.

Yet the world does not quite divide so easily as Berman would have it into the free and the "fascist." As the author himself is aware, there is a fair amount of anti-liberalism within the Western anti-Islam camp. The fundamentalist Christian component to American Mideast policy might be mentioned, though the Christian Right is hardly likely to play a major role in conceptualizing the New American Empire or selecting the next targets for regime change. Berman is honest enough to acknowledge (if only in two sentences) that there is Jewish component in the 20th-century anti-liberal disease—which, like all the fascisms, has its own founding myths of blood and soil and a dehumanizing contempt for those outside the chosen national circle. Berman quietly lets on that there is much of this in Israel's present-day Likud, which surely will complicate an American campaign against against liberalism's foes.

Berman urges a rekindled ideological war against the new totalitarianism, imagining an effort something like the cultural Cold War, with intellectuals debunking the bad ideology and vigor-

ous free trade unions demonstrating that real economic rights require real freedom. But let us count the ways in which the analogy between anti-totalitarianism in the 1930s or the 1950s and that of today doesn't stand up. First of all, there are virtually no indigenous admirers of fundamentalist Islam within the West, certainly nothing like those who stood for communism and fascism. (Where pockets of Islamist sympathy do exist, among some Middle Eastern immigrants and their children, it seems relevant to point out that those in the West who have opposed mass immigration—from Enoch Powell to Pat Buchanan—have been consistently derided as bigots, xenophobes, or worse by progressive intellectuals like Berman.) As for the trade unions, they are not really much a part of American economic life in a globalist economy.

Secondly, unlike the totalitarian movements at their zenith, there is little evidence that Islamism is really on the rise today. Berman gives a warm acknowledgement to Gilles Kepel's superbly researched *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam* but somehow chooses to glide over Kepel's main point, which is that radical Islam is now in its senescence. Look at Iran, the place where the *Jihad* actually triumphed, and Islamism's now universally acknowledged irrelevance to the country's young and educated, and one sees the point. Everywhere Kepel examines the phenomenon, Islamic parties have either lost touch with their mass constituencies or are climbing back towards more nuanced, more democratic and less extremist positions.

Of course a war against a Western invader (or liberator, as imperialists invariably depict themselves) could change that. Once the United States becomes—as it now has—an occupier of Arab land, Islamism should be able to attach itself to one political sentiment that really is eternal: the desire of people to be free of foreign domination. As a recipe for American foreign policy, then, Berman's work comes up well short of the realists'. ■

## MUSIC

### *The Smiths: A Conservative Rock Band*

By Anthony Gancarski

TWENTY YEARS AGO, arguably the most influential British band since the Beatles released their debut single on the UK's independent Rough Trade label. The Smiths' "Hand In Glove" was described by singer/lyricist Stephen Morrissey as "the most important record in the world," and was summarily hailed by members of the music press as "debut record of the year."

It is unimaginable that a pop song could matter so much in the U.S. in 2003. America's popular music machine gravitates toward synthetic beats and the construction of pop stars indistinguishable from exotic dancers. Lyrics are buried in the mix or undercut with vocoder effects, processes that essentially divorce both the singer and the listener from the lyrical content.

Such an enterprise would be impossible with the music of The Smiths, too serious by half for production gimmickry. The aforementioned single, for example, is a song about two lovers watching the death throes of English socialism "hidden by rags," waiting for "the Good Life out there somewhere" that was never to come. To put The Smiths' initial lament into perspective, it was recorded at the same time mindless fluff like "Wham Rap [Enjoy What You Do]" dominated the charts. The band challenged convention in the best possible way—by creating an unimpeachable alternative to the decay around them and by making literally reactionary music that they thought more closely adhered to the values of historical England than that of their contemporaries.

The Smiths' music, after all, came a

few years after the self-conscious nihilism of punk rock gave way to the New Wave's frilly irrelevance. In the pop music of the early '80s, the Manchester, UK band heard music as one-dimensional as anything Orwell described the proles listening to and responded with one of the most resonant debut albums in English history (appropriately enough, the LP was released in 1984). At the time, *New Musical Express* said

vatism. When his pop contemporaries came together to craft grandstanding, fatuous bilge like "Feed The World [Do They Know It's Christmas?]" and "We Are The World," Morrissey and The Smiths stood defiantly alone, crafting songs whose concerns extended far beyond those of charity-record slogans. Early B-Side "Jeane," typical of so many Smiths songs, painted a picture of lovers spent by the squalor in which

no meaningful critique of such a phenomenon. Some argue that the music that charts stateside has triggered the deterioration in our social fabric, a position that is never meaningfully refuted.

After all, what else can such music do? When Christina Aguilera boxes in a sports bra on a Top-10 music video or when two barely legal Russian girls French kiss in another video to sell what is otherwise a thoroughly generic and compromised product, it is easy to imagine that there is an inverse relationship between smut and paucity of content. Furthermore, with pop music debauched in such a manner, it is impossible to imagine radio programmers catering to a mindset that is conservative in the historical sense, a mindset that demands meaning in its music. With that in mind, it is arguable that the seemingly parochial, defiantly English sounds of The Smiths' back catalogue are more relevant to American conservatives than anything they could now hear in the increasingly homogenized wasteland of commercial radio. ■

*Anthony Gancarski has written about music for numerous national publications, including URB and Spin magazines.*

## IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE RADIO PROGRAMMERS CATERING TO A MINDSET THAT IS CONSERVATIVE IN THE HISTORICAL SENSE, A MINDSET THAT DEMANDS MEANING IN ITS MUSIC.

that when lyricist Morrissey "claims to be 'a country mile behind the world' you believe him, largely because his view of the city is one visibly strained through early '60's films of late '50's novels—a notion of reality three times removed."

Keeping in mind that that quote was taken from a sympathetic reviewer, it is easy to sense the difficulty the UK music press had grasping the band's concerns. But Morrissey knew exactly what he was writing about and why it was being written. His comments to the English style magazine *The Face* in 1985 regarding "Suffer Little Children," a song about England's famed "Moors Murders," sound as if they could have been lifted from a discussion of Elizabeth Smart's recent plight:

I happened to live on the streets where, close by, some of the victims had been picked up. Within that community, news of the crimes totally dominated all attempts at conversation. It was like the worst thing that had ever happened ... ungraspably evil ... almost absurd really. I remember it at times like I was living in a soap opera ...

There is a very real consciousness of an almost unbridgeable gap between reality and perception at the heart of Morrissey's lyrics for the Smiths. That gap imbues those lyrics with poignance, humanity, and an essential conser-

they live: "[T]here's ice in the sink where we bathe / How can you call this a home / when you know it's a grave?" Other songs, like 1986's "The Queen Is Dead", express horror at tabloid spectacles like "nine-year-old toughs pushing drugs," by way of arguing that England, like the Queen, no longer existed in a meaningful way.

The evidence of social collapse in the United States has been documented across the political spectrum, just as it had been in England in the 1980s. Yet, unlike in England, our pop music offers

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# Joining the Resistance

"Are Critics of Israel Smeared as Anti-Semites?" trumpets a Nicholas von Hoffman column in the *New York Observer*. Well, yes, Nicholas old boy, they certainly are.

Actually, von Hoffman's column was a very good one. As a liberal of long standing and a friend of Israel—he once came to my house for dinner very long ago, and I was taken by his charm and worldliness—his impeccable credentials make it easy to ask such questions. Alas, we poor traditional conservatives are not given such leeway. One wrong word, however misinterpreted by some neocon zealot, is enough for the midnight knock on the door. The whispering campaign is the worst.

A couple of weeks ago, I flew to San Francisco and taped "Uncommon Knowledge," a public television show on politics. The host of the program, Peter Robinson, an ex-speechwriter for Ronald Reagan and an old friend, let slip that someone had suggested he ask me how my family was rich in 1940 and continued to be rich in 1945. The implication was obvious: my father must have collaborated with the Germans. Robinson was outraged. "Taki was four-years-old back then." He was twice as outraged when I told him the truth. From the main English newspaper of Greece upon my father's death in 1989: "John Theodoropoulos was a member of the Greek Resistance and was awarded with the Order of the Phoenix and Golden Cross Resistance medals and published the then illegal newspaper *Greek Blood*." He did better than that. He won the highest medal for gallantry in action during the 1940 Albanian campaign, blew up the Gestapo headquarters in Athens, and shut down his factories for the duration

despite German demands to keep production going. By 1945, he was ruined, but in appreciation for his wartime activities was given a second chance by the Truman administration when he was allowed to purchase a Liberty ship. (These ships were sold at rock-bottom prices by Uncle Sam to those who had lost ships during the war. My father was the only non-ship-owner permitted to buy).

Who started this whispering? I am not at liberty to say—he did, after all, whisper it *à la* Iago—but if any of you have read my recent columns, you will guess it rather easily. Such are the joys of modern neoconservatism.

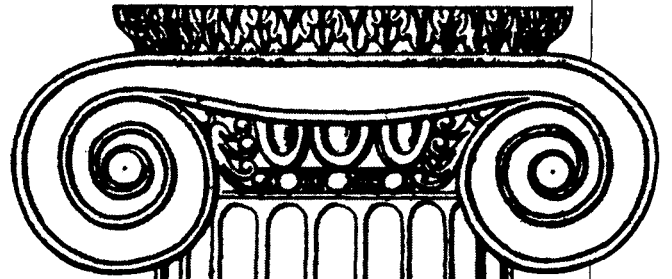
But back to von Hoffman. "The sense of being gagged and intimidated is growing—and with it, a resentment," he writes, and then goes on to tell us—and this is most important—"The underground dissenters (to Israel's treatment

Hear, hear! Take, for example, the Moran case. When Rep. James. P. Moran (D-Va.) suggested, "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we would not be doing this," all hell broke loose. Had Moran been photographed burning Jewish stores during *Kristallnacht*, the effect would have been the same. Although he managed an immediate *mea culpa*, he was nevertheless stripped of his position as regional minority whip, roundly denounced by rabbis and other Jewish and non-Jewish biggies, and threatened with opposition in the next primary. Some Land of the Free. (We all know, of course, about Pat Buchanan, first denounced by Abe Rosenthal as an anti-Semite for suggesting that there was an amen corner in America.) Here's von Hoffman again, writing in a Jewish-owned, very liberal New York weekly: "The Moran case is a cautionary tale reinforcing the spreading conviction that a person risks job, career and status if he or she disagrees with the party line on American foreign policy in the Middle East."

**ONE WRONG WORD, HOWEVER MISINTERPRETED BY SOME NEOCON ZEALOT, IS ENOUGH FOR THE MIDNIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR. THE WHISPERING CAMPAIGN IS THE WORST.**

of the Palestinians) aren't afraid of the government; they fear informal social and economic punishment. They don't fear being thrown in jail, but out on the street. Life-and-death issues of American foreign policy aren't being debated and haven't been debated, because the would-be debaters on one side fear that the personal cost of carrying on the argument would be too high."

What in heaven's name is going on here? Who do these people think they are? It's an easy question to answer: they are haters who are determined to destroy anyone who disagrees with the idea of Greater Israel, a Sharon dream since day one. "Not all violence is alike, and not all violence is illegal or even worthy of condemnation" according to Robert Satloff of the Washington Insti-



tute. Satloff and his backers do not agree with the road map and are suggesting that "its evenhandedness is offensive," writes Philip Weiss in the *Observer*. In other words, they think an indecent parallelism between Palestinian and Jewish violence is taking place. Killing an 18-month-old Palestinian boy—as happened last week—is permissible. Killing a Jewish settler is not. And if you don't agree with Mr. Satloff—and I don't—you're a dirty, rotten anti-Semite—and I'm not. Go figure, as they used to say in Brooklyn.

Well, I've got news for Satloff and the neocons. The Germans didn't manage to intimidate my old man, and I doubt very much these weenies will intimidate his son. (John Podhoretz might be a frightful sight on television, especially for young children, but at my age I don't frighten easily). And it gets worse. When Slobodan Milosevic was accused of ethnic cleansing, the free world was outraged. (That Albanian Muslims were murdering Serbs was overlooked because it was inconvenient for Richard Holbrooke's quest for a Nobel Peace Prize.) Now Benjamin Elon, a minister in Ariel Sharon's government, sees a "window of opportunity" for Israel to annex the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and push all the Palestinians into Jordan. If this isn't ethnic cleansing, I'm Monica Lewinsky!

Just imagine a minister of a European country saying that the Jews are having problems in Israel and they should be "transferred" to another country, say Sudan. The whole world would scream anti-Semitism, and rightly so. Yet Elon gets away with it. Sharon rebuked him ever so slightly but is really whistling Dixie. He was among the first to try to

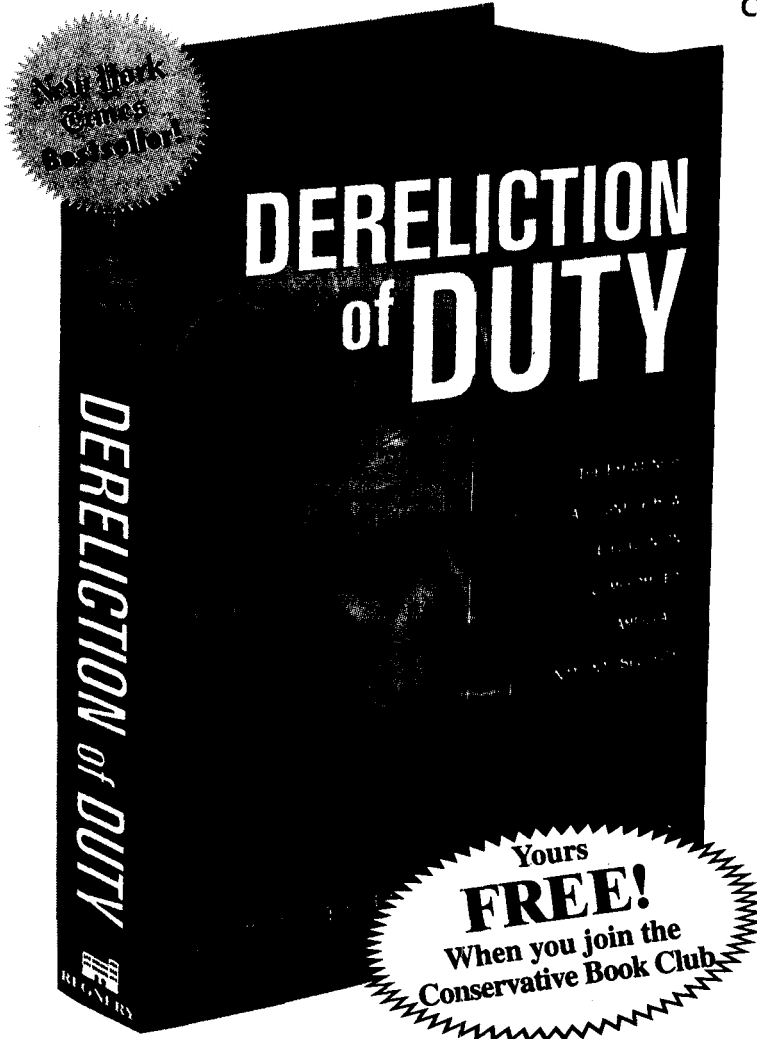
push the Palestinians into Jordan when then King Hussein was battling the PLO in 1970, and has always described the present war against the Palestinians as "the second half of 1948." During that war more than half of the 1,380,000 Palestinians were driven off their homeland by the Israeli army. Israel has always insisted that they fled and were not expelled, but it has refused to allow them to return.

More than 700 Israelis and 2,000 Palestinians have been killed in this *intifada*. There is moral equivalence, no ifs or buts about it, and if this makes me an anti-Semite in the eyes of the haters, so be it. Palestinians have been brutalized to a point that they no longer feel they have anything to lose. As have the Israelis. Veteran correspondent Chris Hedges witnessed an Israeli unit taunting Palestinian children in Gaza to come out and throw stones, whereupon the soldiers shot them with silenced weapons. "I have never before watched soldiers entice children like mice into a trap and murder them for sport," he wrote in *Harper's*.

The respected Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported the Israeli Defense Forces fired *flechette shells designed to explode into thousands of razor-sharp darts at a children's soccer field in Gaza while boys were playing*. Nine were hit. Is *Ha'aretz* anti-Semitic? Are Israelis who abhor Sharon's government policy of allowing extremists to make any future Palestinian state unworkable by expanding the network of colonies anti-Semitic? Are those outraged at the harsh treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli army the world over anti-Semitic? I'll answer the question with a question. You, sirs, ready to accuse anyone who disagrees with you as anti-Semitic, have you no decency? ■

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